FS118: Law and Culture: Unique #35870
Parlin 1: Tuesdays, 2-4pm

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Texts:
- Truman Capote: In Cold Blood
- Redemption (film; screenings TBA)

Course Rationale:
The nature of this course—an examination of the relationship between law and culture—requires you to be proactive, rather than reactive, to the subject. It is not for me or anyone else to say what law or culture “is”—each term accounts for a multitude of phenomena, abstract conceptions, and representations. Each one of you will define the relationship and the individual components of that relationship in your own way because each one of you experiences law and culture in your own way. Race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, sexual preference, historical circumstance are but a few of the characteristics that affect the way you view law and culture. Many times we are not even aware of the bias or privilege that constructs our own rendition of law and culture. One of the aims of the course, then, is to make you more aware of the way in which you “read” (as in interpret) the narrative of law and culture.

Assignments

1. Response Papers (40 pts)
You must turn in two response papers (2–3pp each) during the course of the semester. At least one of those papers should be submitted by 2/14. The paper (typed, double-spaced, no cover sheet) should first briefly summarize the guest speaker’s talk and the discussion that followed. You should relate the assigned reading to the summary and discussion. You should conclude your paper with an account of your response to the material—this is a chance for you to find out how you think about these issues. Do not be afraid of being tentative in your conclusions—you should be using these papers to learn about your own understanding of the material and to acknowledge the complicated nature of the relationship between law, culture, and individual beliefs and desires.

NB. None of the issues we discuss in this class are reducible to “either/or” debates. If they were, the issues would not still be contentious and require periodic revisiting by the courts and the culture. Rational, civic debate is just that—reasoned, respectful and productive of a community consensus that recognizes difference.

2. Review of Redemption (20pts): due date Feb 21st
In this assignment you should review the movie, Redemption, in the context of the two briefs filed for and against clemency for Tookie Williams. The key issues to consider in this assignment are the nature of narrative and the representation of “truth” or “reality.” The review should also take into account the ethical issues involved in narrating a version of “what really happened” in order to bring about a specific
result—how do we know when we are being manipulated and is that manipulation inevitable in all storytelling?

3. Final essay due by 5pm, Friday 10th March, Prof. Heinzelman’s office: Parlin 126 (40pts).

This final essay will bring together several of the issues raised in the class – issues that are moral, aesthetic, and political. Your task is to review the Capote narrative (his version of the murders in his book) in the context of the movie version and/or the recent movie, Capote. The point of the essay is to give an account of how our responses to the event itself (the murders) are mediated through the medium by which they are portrayed – “non-fiction novel” (Capote’s In Cold Blood); the movie that depicts the hunt for the killers; and, if you wish, the recent movie that questions Capote’s motives in his writing of the book. What judgments can we be sure of and what are susceptible to doubt? Are we always at the mercy of someone’s manipulation of the “facts”? If so, should we be more careful about whom we let “tell” those facts? Is the adversarial system of justice the best way of discovering “what really happened”? If we can never know the “full” story of a crime or an event, how can we claim moral certainty in our judgments?
FS18: Law and Culture

1/17: Introduction: What is Law? What is Culture?

Readings for 1/24:
“Saying No To The United States Constitution”
"Our Papalist Supreme Court: Is Reformation Thinkable (or Possible)?"

1/24: Sanford Levinson: (School of Law)

Readings for 1/31:
Tookie Williams briefs –posted on Blackboard by 5pm WED 25th
Screening of Redemption (Starring Jamie Foxx- and available from Vulcan Video-South)
WED JAN 25th @ 7pm; THURS JAN 26th @ 4pm in FAC 344)
DVD ON RESERVE IN AV LIBRARY
“Justice v. Vengeance” (Solomon)

1/31: Robert Solomon (Philosophy and Business): Punishment, Retribution and Revenge

2/7: Discussion: Review papers/Redemption review

Readings for 2/14:
http://www.vawnet.org/SexualViolence/Research/VAWnetDocuments/AR_PornAndSV.pdf
http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/genderarticles.htm

2/14: Robert Jensen (Communications): Pornography and the Law

Readings for 2/21: TBA
Screening of In Cold Blood (Anthony Edwards): TUES FEB 21st @ 6:30; THURS FEB 23rd @ 4.
DVD ON RESERVE IN AV LIBRARY
In Cold Blood (Robert Blake) VIDCASS 3431: available in AV LIBRARY

2/21: Douglas Laycock (School of Law): Religion and the Constitution

Readings for 2/28: TBA

2/28: Ixschtel Rosal (GSC) and Zipporah Wiseman (School of Law): Gender, Sexuality, and Law

Readings for 3/1:
In Cold Blood (Capote)
In Cold Blood (Robert Blake) VIDCASS 3431: available in AV LIBRARY

3/1: Susan Heinzelman (English and WGS): Law and Popular Culture

Readings for 3/7:

3/7: Gretchen Ritter (Government, Director, WGS): Gender and the Constitution

Conclusions

Final paper due March 20th by 5pm in Prof. Heinzelman’s office: Parlin 126