This course explores whether there is a tension between actual legal practices in the “real world” and their portrayal in popular culture—specifically motion pictures. We will ask whether cinematic practices and imperatives give rise to a “reel-world” view of the law. We will focus on a number of related themes which may include: the concept of justice, the relationship between economic status and the law, official v. unofficial law enforcement including the quasi-law enforcement of private detectives, legal education, the practice of law, legal ethics, women in law and politics, discrimination and the law, the role of both civil and criminal courts in a political system, the role of the mass media in relation to law and politics, and law and social change. Students should expect to develop a more in-depth understanding of the issues covered as well as a better appreciation of the cultural and political significance of the way that law and legal actors are depicted in the movies. Students are required to view full-length, feature-films ranging from classics such as The Big Sleep (1946) and Adam’s Rib (1949) to more recent pictures like Thelma & Louise (1991) and Intolerable Cruelty (2003).

Online Course

Instructor: Artemus Ward
Office: 410 Zulauf Hall Office Phone: 815-753-7041
E-mail: aeward@niu.edu Website: http://polisci.niu.edu/polisci/faculty/profiles/ward/
Office Hours: M W 1pm-3pm & by appointment.
**Required Reading:**

All required reading material are on-line and linked from the syllabus.

**Suggested Texts:**


Lucia, Cynthia, *Framing Female Lawyers: Women on Trial in Film* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005).


**Web Resources:**

[Picturing Justice: The On-Line Journal of Law and Popular Culture](http://www.law.fordham.edu/journals/picturingjustice/), University of San Francisco School of Law.

[Law in Popular Culture Collection](http://law.popularculturecenter.org/), Jamail Center for Legal Research, Tarlton Law Library, University of Texas School of Law.

[Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media](http://www.jumpcut.org/), online film journal archive, 1974-present.

[The Best Films of All Time – A Primer of Cinematic History](http://www.filmsite.org), filmsite.org

[The Internet Movie Database](http://www.imdb.com) (IMDb).
**Film List Chronology:**

*Rebecca* (1940). Take the room facing the sea. It’s always good to have options. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock (Academy Award Nomination—Best Director; Academy Award Winner—Best Picture). Starring Laurence Olivier (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actor), Joan Fontaine (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actress), Judith Anderson (Academy Award Nomination—Best Supporting Actress), Nigel Bruce, Reginald Denny, and George Sanders. 130 minutes.

*The Big Sleep* (1946). What is the difference between a detective and a private detective? Maybe it’s that private detectives get all the girls. Directed by Howard Hawks. Starring Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, and Martha Vickers. 116 minutes.

*Adam’s Rib* (1949). When is a courtroom not a courtroom? When it’s really foreplay. Directed by George Cukor. Starring Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn. 101 minutes.

*A Place in the Sun* (1951). George Eastman has a future in the family business—unless of course he can’t keep his hands off the hired help! Directed by George Stevens (Academy Award Winner—Best Director). Starring Montgomery Clift (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actor), Shelley Winters (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actress), Elizabeth Taylor, and Raymond Burr. 122 minutes.


*Chinatown* (1974). Isn’t that sweet? The kindly old grandfather just wants to see his granddaughter. Awwww. Directed by Roman Polanski (Academy Award Nomination—Best Director; Academy Award Nomination—Best Picture). Starring Jack Nicholson (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actor), Faye Dunaway (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actress), John Huston, and Burt Young. 131 minutes.

*Kramer v. Kramer* (1979). When a confused wife and mother walks out on her self-centered, career-focused husband, little Billy is caught in between. Who will grow up first? 3-1 odds on Billy. Directed by Robert Benton (Academy Award Winner—Best Director; Academy Award Winner—Best Picture). Starring Dustin Hoffman (Academy Award Winner—Best Actor), Meryl Streep (Academy Award Winner—Best Supporting Actress), and Jane Alexander (Academy Award Nomination—Best Supporting Actress). 105 minutes.


*Thelma & Louise* (1991). Die rebel die! Directed by Ridley Scott (Academy Award Nomination—Best Director). Starring Geena Davis (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actress), Susan Sarandon (Academy Award Nomination—Best Actress), Harvey Keitel, and Brad Pitt. 129 minutes.

*Primal Fear* (1996). Sure, being a defense attorney can lead to fame and fortune, but it can also lead to failed relationships and a nagging conscience. Caveat Emptor. Directed by Gregory Hoblit.
Starring Richard Gere, Edward Norton (Academy Award Nomination—Best Supporting Actor), Laura Linney, and Frances McDormand. 129 minutes.


*Intolerable Cruelty* (2003). When the Massey is signed, only love is in mind. Or is it? Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. Starring George Clooney, Catherine Zeta-Jones, and Billy Bob Thornton. 100 minutes.

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**Course Requirements:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-Line Participation</strong></td>
<td>You are required to go on-line each week through Blackboard, and read the messages posted to the discussion board. You are also required to post in 7 different weeks of the course. Hence, making a post every other week will suffice. In these weeks you should post at least one (and not more than two) messages of your own, either responding to someone or making your own thread, about that week’s course material and/or current events that relate to the course. Do this by Sunday night at the end of each week. The participation grade will be calculated by averaging the % of quality posts you make (out of 7 weeks) with the % of posts that you read. Note, you can see the “unread posts” that you have yet to read on the main discussion board page. After you click on and read each post it will show that post as no longer “unread.” The final participation grade will be posted at the end of the course.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Term Paper**               | You are required to write a 5-6 page term paper which is due at the end of the course on the date specified on the course calendar. In this paper I expect you to go beyond the course material. You can either examine themes in required films and then add to that by screening similar films on your own, or you can choose a theme that we do not cover in the course but that relates to the course topic: law and film. The paper must include an appropriate discussion of:  
  1. At least four films that are relevant to your topic. These films can be ones we view in class and/or films you view on your own. They must be discussed and cited in your essay and also listed in your bibliography.  
  2. At least four different sources such as books or articles that relate to the films you are discussing. These sources can be on-line and can be sources linked from the syllabus and/or sources you locate on your own. They must be discussed and cited in your essay and also listed in your bibliography. While you may use any book or article, in order to earn an “A” |
on the paper all four sources must be scholarly books or articles in academic journals. Toward this end I strongly recommend using JSTOR or another scholarly database to find articles in film studies, communications, and other related areas. Papers that rely on popular sources such as newspaper articles and film reviews can only earn a “C” at best. Papers that rely on general film webpages such as Wikipedia or IMDB can only earn a “D” at best. Note: course lectures do NOT count as a source toward this requirement.

Some possible topics: How Official Public Authorities v. Private Resourceful Heroes Resolve Legal Problems, How Film Depicts the Effects of Divorce on Adults and Children; Male and Female Lawyers in the Movies, How Women are Depicted and Treated in the Legal World, Gender (or Race) Relations in Courtroom Films, Portrayals of Plea Bargaining in Film, Hollywood Depictions of the Death Penalty, Juries in Films, When Little Guys Sue Big Companies in the Movies, Police and Prosecutors, Law as Power v. Law and Justice, When Bad Cops Are Treated as Good Cops, Depictions of Sexual Harassment (or Rape) in the Movies, Military Justice in Hollywood Movies, Organized Crime v. the Law, “States of Emergency” in Film, Vigilantism in Film, Judges in Film, Hollywood and the First Amendment, Hollywood Spoofs the Criminal Trial, Law and Lawyers in Grisham Movies. For other ideas explore the suggested readings and on-line resources.

As with all papers, the paper for this class must be type-written or word-processed, double-spaced, with normal fonts (usually 12 pt.) and margins (at most one inch all around). Make sure that you properly attribute and cite whenever you use information from a source such as a book, article, or film. You may use any accepted citation format such a within-text-cites, footnotes, or endnotes and any accepted bibliographic style. Consult a resource such as the Chicago Style manual or similar work if you are unsure of proper citation/bibliographic formats. This is particularly crucial for internet sources. Also, films should be cited in the bibliography by title and year.

Before you start writing this or any essay, ask yourself: What is my overall argument/thesis? Am I supporting my position with reasons and/or evidence? Am I structuring my discussion so that it is as clear and comprehensive as it can be? Have I provided examples and explanations for each argument that I advance? What are the possible counter-arguments that my critics might bring up and how would I respond to those criticisms?

In grading your essays I will consider whether you have (a) developed a clear and thoughtful thesis, (b) supported your thesis with a well-reasoned and well-organized discussion, (c) taken into account opposing points of view, (d) demonstrated your familiarity with course materials, and (e) followed the paper requirements including length, sources, and the rules of proper grammar, spelling, and citation/bibliographic format. Note: JSTOR is not a source and should not be cited in your bibliography. It is a highly recommended search engine which allows you to locate specific sources.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will be an objective test consisting of multiple choice and true/false questions about the required lectures, films, and readings that you are responsible for up to
that point in the course. There will be 25 questions and you will have 30 minutes maximum to complete the exam once you start. It will be available through Blackboard for a 24-hour period on the day listed on the course calendar (below). Make sure you use a reliable computer to take the test. The exam cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Final Exam

The final exam will be the same format as the midterm: an objective test consisting of multiple choice and true/false questions about the lectures, films, and readings. However, the final will only cover course material assigned AFTER the midterm exam. There will be 25 questions and you will have 30 minutes maximum to complete the exam once you start. It will be available through Blackboard for a 24-hour period on the day listed on the course calendar (below). Make sure you use a reliable computer to take the test. The final cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Grading System:

Final grades will be determined by the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-Line Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Policies:
1. Extracurricular Activities - It is your responsibility to notify me in advance of any activities that will disrupt your participation in the class. If your activities make it impossible for you to keep up with the course material you should consider withdrawing from the course.

2. Late Work - Anything turned in late will be marked down one-third grade for every day it is overdue. Exceptions are made only in the most extraordinary circumstances and I will require some sort of documentation to make any accommodation.

3. Cheating and Plagiarism - Students cheating and plagiarizing will fail the assignment on which they have committed the infraction and will be referred to the appropriate judicial board for disciplinary action. The submission of any work by a student is taken as guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, opinions, or other products of work as one's own, either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source.

4. Undergraduate Writing Awards - The Department of Political Science will recognize, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Winners are expected to attend the Department's spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and $50.00. Papers, which can be submitted by students or faculty, must be supplied in triplicate to a department secretary by the end of February. All copies should have two cover pages - one with the student's name and one without the student's name. Only papers written in the previous calendar can be considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year's competition even if the student has graduated.

5. Statement Concerning Students with Disabilities - Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NIU is committed to making reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Those students with disabilities that may have some impact on their coursework and for which they may require accommodations should notify the Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR) on the fourth floor of the Health Services Building. CAAR will assist students in making appropriate accommodations with course instructors. It is important that CAAR and instructors be informed of any disability-related needs during the first two weeks of the semester.

6. Department of Political Science Web Site - Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science web site on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to http://polisci.niu.edu.

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Course Calendar:
I suggest that you watch the film before accessing the course materials on it. You should also take notes while viewing. Many of these films are highly complex and, as you will be discussing some of them in your final paper, you will want to refer to specific characters, scenes, and even dialogue. If you are like me and prefer to watch films without knowing anything about what you are about to see, then I recommend doing the assigned readings and accessing lecture material AFTER you watch each film. You may find that after viewing the film once and then accessing the course materials, you may want to watch the picture again and again… I have seen most of these pictures dozens of times and have memorized much of the dialogue. If you are not careful, you may end up in the same, sad shape… films are addicting! Caveat emptor!

Week 3: Reel Justice

Course Introduction.

Film excerpts: North by Northwest (1959); Scarface (1983); Rope (1948); The Godfather (1972); Blade Runner (1982).

Class Justice and Morality

Week 4: Class, Justice and Morality I

Film: Rebecca (1940).

Reading:
Dirks, Tim, “Rebecca (1940),” filmsite.org, undated.

Week 5: Class, Justice and Morality II.

Film: A Place in the Sun (1951).

Reading:
Week 6: Class, Justice and Morality III.

Film: Vertigo (1958).

Reading:

Recommended Films: The Ox-Bow Incident (1943); Roshomon (1950); Judgment at Nuremberg (1961); A Man for All Seasons (1966); Breaker Morant (1980); Gandhi (1982); Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989); Goodfellas (1990); Gangs of New York (2003).

Recommended Reading:
- Grant, Judith, “Morality and Liberal Legal Culture,” in Legal Realism, Ch.8.

Law Enforcement—Crime and Detection in the City of the Angels

“The best crime movies…are not about who did it, or why. They are about how the characters feel about what happened.”

– Roger Ebert, 1996.

Week 7: Law Noir

Film: The Big Sleep (1946)

Reading:
○ Blaser, John, No Place for a Woman: The Family in Film Noir and Other Essays. April 1999. “Film Noir's Progressive Portrayal of Women” and “Film Noir and the Hard-Boiled Detective Hero.”

**Week 8: Postmodern Law Noir**


Reading:


The mid-term exam will be available on Blackboard for a 24-hour period beginning on T March 4th at noon.

**Week 9: Spring Break**

**Week 10: Retro Law Noir**

Film: *Chinatown* (1974).

Reading:


Recommended: *M* (1931); *Fury* (1936); *Marked Woman* (1937); *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940); *The Maltese Falcon* (1941); *Double Indemnity* (1944); *Call Northside 777* (1948); *Force of Evil* (1948); *Knock on Any Door* (1949); *DOA* (1950); *Psycho* (1960); *The Long Goodbye* (1973); *Foul Play* (1978); *Blade Runner* (1982); *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984); *Fletch* (1985); *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991); *Pulp Fiction* (1994); *L.A. Confidential* (1997); *Get Shorty* (1995); *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1998); *I, Robot* (2004).

**Week 11: Divorce 70s-Style I**

Film: *Kramer v. Kramer* (1979)
Reading:


Week 12: Divorce 70s-Style II

Film: Manhattan (1979)

Reading:


Week 13: Postmodern Divorce

Film: Intolerable Cruelty (2003)

Reading:


Recommended Films: The Divorcee (1930); Platinum Blonde (1931); Born to Love (1931); The Gay Divorcee (1934); One More River (1934); The Awful Truth (1937); It Happened One Night (1934); The Women (1939); The Letter (1940); My Favorite Wife (1940); Mr. & Mrs. Smith (1941); The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946); The Paradine Case (1947); Payment on Demand (1951); Man on Fire (1957); The Parent Trap (1961); Divorce Italian Style (1962); Divorce American Style (1967); Play It Again, Sam (1972); Blume in Love (1973); Paper Moon (1973); Scenes from a Marriage (1973); Network (1976); An Unmarried Woman (1978); E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982); Irreconcilable Differences (1984); Pretty in Pink (1986); War of the Roses (1989); Boys’n the Hood (1991); My Girl (1991); Husbands and Wives (1992); Mrs. Doubtfire (1993); Sleepless in Seattle (1993); My Girl II (1994); Bye Bye Love (1995); Losing Isaiah (1995); Waiting to Exhale (1995); The First Wives Club (1996); One Fine Day (1996); As Good As It Gets (1997); Stepmom (1998); Big Daddy (1999); Music of the Heart (1999); The Story of Us (1999); The Squid and the Whale (2005).

Recommended Reading:


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**Week 14: Bar Girls: Women in the Courtroom I**

**Film:** *Adam’s Rib* (1949)

**Reading:**


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**Week 15: Bar Girls: Women in the Courtroom III**

**Film:** *Primal Fear* (1996)

**Reading:**

- Ebert, Roger, “*Primal Fear,”* rogerebert.com, April 5, 1996.

**Recommended Films:**


**Recommended Reading:**

Week 16: Women as Legal Outlaws

Film: *Thelma and Louise* (1991)

Reading:


Recommended Readings:


**Final term papers are due on Tuesday April 29. Upload to SafeAssign on Blackboard.**

Week 17: Final Exam

The final exam will be available on Blackboard for a 24-hour period beginning on Tuesday May 6th at noon.