

LAW AND LITERATURE 952 ("Law-Lit")
Capital University Law School,
Spring 2026 (2 Credit Hours)
Adjunct Professor: Mark Lewis,
Kitrick, Lewis & Staley-Sladek Co., L.P.A.

I. LAW'S STORIES

This course explores law's meaning, practice, and value through stories.

Stories allow us to examine how lawyers, judges, and citizens reason, decide, persuade, and live with the consequences of their choices. We also ask enduring questions: What values lead to a meaningful life in law? How should lawyers communicate truthfully and persuasively? What should we do when law and morality collide? When, if ever, is it right to bend—or break—the law?

Through classic and contemporary works of fiction, film, and real cases, we use story as both mirror and laboratory: a mirror for examining our own emerging professional identities, and a laboratory for testing ethical judgment, narrative craft, and legal reasoning. Along the way, we will also work with "real case stories" from actual litigation, using them to practice how lawyers shape facts, build credibility, and tell persuasive narratives.

We develop practical skills in legal writing and professional communication—credibility, emotional resonance, and persuasion—by studying how stories work.

Law is not only a system of rules; it is also a profession grounded in judgment, empathy, and narrative. This course helps you develop those habits of mind — so that your legal writing, advocacy, and decision-making are guided not only by logic, but by practical wisdom

II. WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AT-A-GLANCE

Class	Reading/Viewing
1/8	"A Jury of Her Peers," Susan Glaspell (short story)
1/15	Juror No. 2 (movie)
1/22	Antigone, Sophocles (play)
1/29	The Children Act (movie)
2/5	Billy Budd, Melville (novella excerpts)
2/12	Michael Clayton (movie)
2/19	"The Deposition," Tobias Wolff (short story)
2/26	Law's Images, Anarchy & Elegance (excerpts)
3/5	"Notes From a Difficult Case," Ruthann Robson (essay)
3/12	The Verdict (movie)

3/19	Spring Break - No assignment
3/26	Noon Wine, Katherine Anne Porter (novella)
4/2	Just Mercy (movie)
4/9	Dead Man Walking (movie)
4/16	TBD depending on schedule

III. REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

- A. Stories and Movies. We read the writings and watch the movies listed above. All readings are available free online at various sites and/or will be emailed by Prof. Lewis before class the week of the assignment. The movies are available on multiple streaming services such as Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon, Max and the like. If accessing a film becomes difficult for you, let me know – I usually have alternatives.
- B. Papers. You will write **two papers**: a short one at mid-semester and longer one at semester's end. The **short paper (3-5 pages)** can explore an interpretive, jurisprudential, thematic, or creative issue raised in law-lit. I'll offer a list of approaches, ideas, and topics, while also inviting you to develop your own. The first short paper is due later in February on a day to be announced. It is worth **25%** of your grade. The **longer paper (5-7 pages)** is due our final week or later time determined by our schedule. This final paper is worth **50%** of your grade.
- C. Class Participation. We create a classroom in which we're all willing to share our personal and intellectual struggles with this thought-provoking material. To help achieve this goal, I create questions and talking points for our weekly class dialogue, called "Law-Lit confabs." I'll email the confab before each class. **You are required to provide written answers to confabs as part of your class participation grade. You also garner participation points by active listening, meaningful engagement and thoughtful contributions to our class discussion.** Your participation equals **25%** of your grade. More than 3 unexcused absences may lower your final grade by one level (A to A-).
- D. Real Case Stories. Most weeks I will share the facts and circumstances of an actual case from our legal system — often from my own 30+ years of practice as a litigator and trial lawyer. These **real case stories** help us see how narrative shapes justice and perception, both inside the courtroom and beyond it. We use them as lenses into the realities of practice and as laboratories for applying the storytelling tools we are developing — character, conflict, stakes, theme, and persuasive structure. At times, you may be asked to sketch arguments, narrative frames, or alternative tellings of these cases as part of our class dialogue.
- E. <http://www.literaryl原因.org>. Visit our class website for further info, links, and welcoming content about our studies. The syllabus and various online readings can be found along the left-hand column of the website home page.

IV. OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

Student Success

Capital University is committed to supporting your success as a student and as a person. Student Success services are available to help work through any challenges or barriers to success, to guide you to the best resources available, and to help you stay on a consistent path to success. For assistance, contact Lauren Emptage, Professor and Director of Academic Success, at lemptage@law.capital.edu or (614) 236-6564.

Center for Health and Wellness

You may experience situations or face personal challenges that affect academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. Capital University offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times. Contact Capital University's Center for Health and Wellness by phone at (614) 236-6114, by email at chw@capital.edu, or in person at the Kline Center. 24-hour mental health support is available by calling the Center for Health and Wellness, (614) 236-6114.

Accessibility Services

Capital University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you are seeking academic accommodations, you are required to disclose your disability to the Accessibility Office and to make a request for accommodations. Further information may be obtained by contacting the Accessibility Office by email at alemaster3@capital.edu or by telephone at (614) 236-6611. Additional information regarding the process for registering with the Accessibility Office may be found at <https://www.capital.edu/about/accessibility-services/>. This syllabus is available in an alternate format upon request.)

Academic Accommodations are implemented at the Law School through the University accessibility team, led by Director Ashley LeMaster: alemaster3@capital.edu. The information you will need to request accommodations may be found at: <https://www.capital.edu/about/accessibility-services/>.

If you are approved for testing accommodations, which usually consist of additional time or a distraction-reduced space, you must submit an Accommodated Exam Schedule Request for each exam to Pat Fitzpatrick, the Student Affairs Program Assistant, at pfitzpatrick@law.capital.edu, or in person in Room 386 of the Law School. The form is found here: <http://law.capital.edu/RecordsandRegistrationStudentForms> and is due two weeks before midterms and one month before finals. Only the Dean or Dean's delegate can approve student requests to reschedule examinations; "instructors cannot excuse students from taking exams at the regularly scheduled time for any reason." Manual of Policies & Procedures (MPP) § 4.8.03 (A).

The Law School's guidelines on requests for exceptions to policies and procedures based on physical or mental disability are outlined in the Manual of Policies and Procedures, Section 6.5 (<https://www.law.capital.edu/academics/juris-doctor/manual-of-policies-and-procedures/>).

Exam Conflict Policy

In-class exams will occur during the period indicated on the academic calendar. Students are expected to complete in-class exams during the designated times with two exceptions: a personal

exam conflict (e.g. illness, documented accommodation, or unforeseen circumstances) or an exam conflict). The Law School defines an exam conflict as two or more examinations with beginning times within a 24-hour period. MPP § 4.8.02 (B) (1). Please note that this does not include exams that can occur exactly 24 hours (or more) apart. For example, an exam that is offered beginning at 8:00am on a Monday does not conflict with an exam that is offered beginning at 8:00am on a Tuesday. Moreover, “the Dean or Dean’s delegate,” not the course instructor, determines whether a conflict exists and when it may be scheduled. MPP § 4.8.02 (C) (1). So, in requesting relief from a proposed exam conflict, abide by the following procedure.

Students with exam conflicts should follow the process below and submit forms to Student Affairs (Room 386) or via email at pfitzpatrick@law.capital.edu no later than two weeks prior to the first day of the exam period.

Step 1: Print the exam schedule and highlight all exams you are scheduled to take.

Step 2: Complete the [Exam Conflict Form](#).

Step 3: Submit the Exam Conflict Form along with your exam schedule and/or appropriate documentation for personal conflicts.

For more information, please visit <https://www.law.capital.edu/academics/exam-resources/exam-conflicts/>.

Generative AI Policy

Under Section 6.2.5.02 of our Manual of Policies and Procedures, students may not receive help on “outside work,” including work leading to the production of written material to be completed outside of class and “to be submitted to and graded by the instructor.” Over the past few months, the usage of generative AI to create written content has proliferated. Unfortunately, given the prevalence of “hallucinations—AI-generated results that are incorrect and, at times, fabricated—has caused consternation in academic and professional circles.

For this reason, our proscription against collaboration on outside work must be updated. The new language is in bold font. Note that the blanket proscription may be overridden by the express permission of any individual course instructor.

No student shall cooperate with another student or solicit cooperation from or offer cooperation to another student, in the preparation of outside work assigned to both, unless cooperation on that specific assignment has been expressly permitted by the instructor.

No student may use generative artificial intelligence (AI), including, but not limited to Chat GPT and Bing Ai, unless, and to the extent that, the usage has been expressly permitted by the instructor.

No student assigned outside work shall solicit or receive cooperation or assistance in the preparation from persons, sources, or objects (including but not limited to computers), where such cooperation or assistance on the specific assignment has been expressly forbidden by the instructor.

Permission to use a computer does not include permission to use generative AI, unless the usage of generative AI has been expressly permitted by the instructor.

Title IX – Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Misconduct

Capital University is committed to ensuring a safe environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual misconduct and harassment. If you experienced an incident of sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct, we encourage you to report it. You may report the incident to the University's Title IX Coordinator, Deanna Wagner by email (at dwagner1453@capital.edu) or by phone at (614) 236-6904. The Law School's Title IX Deputy is Dean Gilbert located in Room 388 who can assist with answering questions and understanding reporting options.

Capital University faculty are committed to supporting students, however, please understand that faculty are "responsible employees" of the University and must report any incident of sex- or gender-based discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX Coordinator.

Please refer to Capital University's Sex- or Gender-Based Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct policy for more information on reporting options:

<https://www.capital.edu/about/title-ix-and-sexual-harassment/>.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential to Capital University's mission of transforming lives through higher education. Diversity refers to the differences that exist among people. Inclusion denotes the proactive behaviors that facilitate an environment that allows each person to feel welcomed and affirmed. Our community:

- Values and creates a welcoming and supportive environment that honors and engages the many aspects of diversity and dignity for all.
- Intentionally seeks to attract, nurture, and retain diverse students, faculty, and staff.
- Fosters acceptance, respect, and appreciation of all persons regardless of background as vital elements of our university community.
- Celebrates our commonalities and unique differences and asserts that diversity broadens learning, stimulates creativity, and promotes the exchange of ideas.

Capital University Law School's Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is Bren Sutter. Dean Sutter can be reached by email at bsutter2@law.capital.edu, or by ph