

Book Suggestions

1. *The Indomitable George Washington Fields: From Slave to Attorney*
– Kevin M. Clermont

George Washington Fields (1854-1932) entered with the first law class of Cornell University and earned his LL.B. degree there in 1890. Although the university's records were previously silent on this, Fields was the new law school's first African-American graduate. Even more distinctively, he was the only ex-slave ever to graduate from Cornell. His drive, intelligence and thirst for knowledge will inspire law students.

2. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
– Michelle Alexander

American society has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, including disproportionately large rate of imprisonment for African American men. Alexander argues that the American criminal justice system uses incarceration as a system of racial control that serves the same discriminatory and oppressive goals of Jim Crow.

3. *Gideon's Trumpet* – Anthony Lane

A legal classic that recounts the history of the landmark case *Gideon v. Wainwright*, regarding Clarence Earl Gideon's constitutional fight for the right to legal counsel in a state criminal case. A great introduction to the workings of the Supreme Court.

4. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* – Trevor Noah

The compelling, inspiring, and often hilarious coming-of-age story, set during the twilight of apartheid and the tumultuous days of freedom that followed. A meditation on language, on how law and society reinforce each other, and on how society deals with domestic violence.

5. *Just Mercy* – Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system.

6. *A Civil Action* – Jonathan Harr

The true story, with lots of accurate and non-boring civil procedure, including an epic courtroom showdown, where two of the nation's largest corporations are sued for causing the deaths of children from water contamination. Provides an excellent introduction to Civil Procedure and Torts.

7. *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*
– Henry Lewis Gates

A beautifully written, scholarly discussion of reconstruction and the violent reaction of the South to emancipation and full equality of former slaves. Focusing on visual art, explains how the activities of white paramilitary groups, deteriorating economic conditions, and the racism and apathy of the North led to the murder of thousands of black people and the degradations of Jim Crow.

8. *Madame Prosecutor: Confrontations with Humanity's Worst Criminals and the Culture of Impunity* – Carla del Ponte

Carla Del Ponte won international recognition as Switzerland's attorney general pursuing organized crime. In 1999, she became the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, confronting genocide and crimes against humanity head-on, struggling to bring to justice to the highest-ranking individuals responsible for massive acts of violence in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo.

9. *Whose Monet? An Introduction to the American Legal System* – John A. Humbach

Focusing on a dispute over the ownership of a painting, this introduction to law provides a highly accessible and appealing orientation to the American legal system. It presents basic concepts of civil litigation as a vehicle for introducing students to the basic law school tasks of reading analytically, understanding legal materials, and working with the common law.

10. *Hillbilly Elegy* – J. D. Vance

From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America's white working class.

Movie Suggestions

1. *12 Angry Men* (1957)

A young man is accused of stabbing his father to death. Following the closing arguments in a murder trial, the twelve members of the jury must deliberate. As the jurors try to reach a unanimous decision while sequestered in a room, one juror (Henry Fonda) casts doubt on elements of the case.

2. *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959)

Based on the best-selling novel by Robert Traver (the pseudonym for Michigan Supreme Court justice John D. Voelker), *Anatomy of a Murder* stars James Stewart as a Michigan lawyer who represents a man accused of murdering a local bar owner.

3. *Big Short* (2015)

Writer/director Adam McKay joins forces with Paramount Pictures and Plan B Entertainment to adapt Michael Lewis' best-seller *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*, which centers on the housing credit bubble of the 2000s.

4. *Dead Man Walking* (1995)

Sister Helen Prejean (Susan Sarandon), a nun and teacher living in rural Louisiana, receives a letter from Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn), who is scheduled to be executed soon for the rape and murder of two teenagers. After meeting Matthew, Sister Helen agrees to serve as spiritual counselor and see what she can do to stay the execution.

5. *Erin Brockovich* (2000)

Julia Roberts plays Erin Brockovich in this legal drama based on the true story of a woman who discovers a systematic cover-up of the industrial poisoning of a city's water supply, helping to win the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit.

6. *A Few Good Men* (1992)

A Navy defense attorney must prove that a pair of Marines is innocent of murdering a fellow fighter. The lawyer's biggest obstacle is a conniving base commander who wants the whole affair swept under the carpet. Dramatic courtroom cross-examination.

7. *Inherit the Wind* (1960)

Inspired by the 1925 "Monkey Trial," in which Tennessee schoolteacher John Scopes was arrested for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in violation of state law, the movie recreates the trial where attorney Clarence Darrow defended Scopes.

8. *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961)

In 1947, four German judges who served on the bench during the Nazi regime face a military tribunal to answer charges of crimes against humanity.

9. *My Cousin Vinny* (1992)

Hilarious and accurate on evidence law, this film depicts two young men falsely accused of murder represented by Cousin Vinny, a newly minted lawyer who has never tried a criminal case. Marisa Tomei received an Oscar for her performance as Vinny's girlfriend and star witness.

10. *The Paper Chase* (1973)

See the first year of law school through the eyes of a brilliant but naïve first-year student at the Harvard Law School. Like most of his fellow aspiring attorneys, Hart is in fearful awe of his demanding, ego-deflating instructor, Professor Kingsfield (John Houseman).

11. *Philadelphia* (1993)

Tom Hanks, in his first Academy Award-winning performance, plays Andrew Beckett, a talented lawyer at a stodgy Philadelphia law firm. Andrew has contracted AIDS but fears informing his firm about the disease.

12. *The Verdict* (1982)

Frank Galvin, a washed-up alcoholic Boston lawyer, seeks redemption, taking a medical negligence case against a powerful attorney. Raises many ethical issues and portrays excellent courtroom scenes; unfortunately gets the "best evidence rule" wrong.

13. *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957)

An unusual murder case tempts an ailing barrister back into action in this courtroom drama based on an Agatha Christie play.

More Movies

Professor Emeritus Alex Tanford compiled a list of 100 movies. He writes:

Here's the link to Tanford's Top 100 courtroom movies. The list does not include movies with other kinds of legal themes, because courtroom drama makes for exciting movies, and the rule against perpetuities would make a boring movie (well, except for Body Heat).

<http://law.indiana.edu/instruction/tanford/b723/movies.shtml>