Jurisprudence: Syllabus
Spring Term, 2006
Professor Milner S. Ball

You will know from the “Course Description” that we will be taking a long as well
as broad view of jurisprudence, of ways to think about what lawyers do and how they do it.

You will also have supposed that we shall make use of Athens as one of our
resources. We will likely have to depart from the orderly chronological sequence of
readings listed below in order to seize opportunistically what the term may bring us;
visiting lecturers, trials, interviews, films, DVDs, blogs, etc.

I will divide the class into small working groups for reading, presenting texts, and
field work.

Readings [others to be assigned as occasion demands]:

1. Law in the Bible
   A. Prefatory Consideration of Law in the Bible (available from UGA Law Library
electronic reserve) (UGA L.L. e.r.)
   B. Ancient Israel and the Divine Lawsuit: poetry of the Eighth Century B.C.E. prophets.
      (UGA L.L. e.r.)

2. Portrayal of ancient Greece’s Law, Lawyers and Trials: Aeschylus’ Oresteian Trilogy
   (Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides) and Plato’s Socrates (Apology, Phaedo,
   Crito) (assigned secondary reading available from UGA L.L.e.r)

3. Law and Lawyers in early Iceland: Njaal’s Saga (related assigned readings available
   from UGA L.L.e.r.)

4. Shakespearean visions of lawyering: The Merchant of Venice (related readings TBA)

5. The modern continental inquisitorial system: Camus’ The Stranger.


Other reading/viewing will be assigned as occasion and advantage require

You will be required to keep a journal and to turn it in periodically. Also a short
summary paper will be due at the end of the semester.
First Assignment

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First assignments

At the first meeting, I will offer a brief preview of the course and address administrative issues. The substantive subject of the first two (+) meetings will be law in the Bible, primarily the divine lawsuit. The reading assignments are available from the Library electronic reserve for this course as follows:

1. Law in the Bible: Outline. The boldface citations in the text of the outline refer to readings that are appended to it. We will work our way through this material with reasonable speed.

2. The Word and the Law pp. 110-13 plus notes (the divine lawsuit) [listed as reading #2]

3. The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV 866, 874-75 (chap. 6), 1148, 1151-52 (chap. 4:1-10; 1170, 1171-74 (chap 1-3; 1190, 1191 (chap. 1:1-12) 1196-97 (6:1-16) (excerpts from the 8th Century BCE prophets: Isaiah, Hosea Amos, Micah) [listed as reading #1]


Books for the course:

1. Aeschylus, Oresteia- Grene & Lattimore eds.& trans, Aeschylus I (Chicago, 1953, 1992);
5. Albert Camus, The Stranger (any edition)
Like customary jurisprudence courses, this one will have ways of thinking about law in the western tradition as its subject, but the material and the approach will be not be customary.

The course will be organized around the proposition that, from the beginning, the trial has been central to our tradition’s understanding of law.

The writings that we will study will be drawn from such sources as Eighth Century B.C.E. biblical prophets, ancient Greek theater, Plato’s Socrates, Icelandic sagas, Shakespeare, Camus, and, at the end, recent theory. We will also make use of film and (as available) theatrical performances and TV (and other media). In addition we will use Athens as a resource: How think about law as it actually functions here?

Flexibility and venturesomeness will be necessary. Viewing films will mean that we gather at times other than the scheduled hours. And field work (trial observation, interviews) does not fit well into normal law school schedules. Also, the subject matter will require a kind of attention different from that which you must bring to casebooks.

Enrollment is limited to 18 people. You will be divided into groups for the work. In addition to preparing for and participating in classes, you will be asked to keep a journal for periodic review and to submit at the end a summary essay of moderate length.