

Engaging and Assessing Our Students
Summer Conference of the Institute for Law Teaching and Learning

Handouts

Session: You Can't Handle the Truth: Using Pop Culture to Teach Legal Research

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Description: I'm Just a Bill. Marcia Clark being schooled during the OJ trial for not Shepardizing. Pop culture is full of examples of legal research. Speakers will provide examples and demonstrate best practices for integrating video clips, songs, comics and other pop culture references into your legal research lesson. This session will address how using pop culture and humor can humanize teachers to students, encourage student participation in what many see as a "boring" class, foster collaboration among instructors and be an effective tool for peer instruction. Speakers will also discuss avoiding dangers of using this technique in the classroom.

Sample Lesson Plan

Title: Narrowing your search: Search parameters in online and print research

Level: First year Legal Research

Length of Lesson: 30-40 minutes

Lesson Summary & Context:

Students will have done some online and print research previously (possibly prior to law school). This lesson of video clips & related discussion can be used to generate discussion with students about setting appropriate search parameters, especially when introducing online research.

This lesson provides a useful segue into Terms and Connectors v. Natural Language, picking the right database, planning out your search first, etc.

Note: While designed for first year law students, this lesson can be used with any level of research class.

Standards or Objectives:

- Plan a comprehensive approach to a legal information problem,
- Efficiently acquire legal information from print and electronic sources, and

Note: these can be ABA Standards, Law School outcomes, or Course objectives as listed in the Syllabus

Student Outcomes:

The student will be able to describe the benefits of narrowing search terms prior to beginning research.

The student will be able to describe the benefits of choosing appropriately narrow resources to use in research.

Materials:

Clips

1. All the President's Men: <http://ivegotahit.pbworks.com/w/page/35143003/All-the-President's-Men>
2. The Middleman 1x07 – The Cursed Tuba Contingency: <http://ivegotahit.pbworks.com/w/page/35143115/The+Middleman+1x07++The+Cursed+Tuba+Contingency>

Instructional Strategies & Sequence:

Introduction (3 minutes)

Provide background for the video clips. Describe where in the research process each of the protagonists is.

Viewing Clips (5 minutes)

Show the All the President's Men clip first (2 min) – Woodward and Bernstein go to the Library of Congress, trying to figure out which books Howard Hunt was checking out. They're told all White House transactions are confidential, so they go to another librarian and simply request to see every check-out slip from that year, which will – of course – include the ones they want too.

Then show the Middleman clip (2 min) – Ida basically does a Google search for the word “tuba” and spends hours going through useless results.

Open Discussion (10 minutes):

Ask students what lessons can be learned from those clips. A few ideas:

- Research can be very time intensive
 - in print and online
 - just because it's online doesn't mean it's easier to find

- Online research is a powerful tool, just be smart about it:
 - Narrow your search
 - typing words into a search box isn't enough
 - too many results waste your time
 - actually typing "tuba" in Google = 16 million+ results
 - Think about what you're looking for first
 - find the right words or database

In past sessions in which these clips were shown, the first student response was "online research is easier" – which is not at all supported by the clips themselves. But students often assume that online is easier/better. Point out that, although both searches took hours, Woodward and Bernstein narrowed their search as much as they could under the circumstances, and patiently sifted through results; Ida wasted everyone's time by not properly narrowing her search to begin with. Note to students that this isn't a print v. online argument – use smart techniques whichever one you're using.

Ask students if they have even been in the position of either Woodward & Bernstein (slogging through voluminous relevant results) or Ida (look through tons of overbroad search results). What would they do differently next time?

Relate to Course Content (15 minutes):

What do these clips teach us about doing legal research?

How will this experience change your approach to your next research assignment?

Assessment Planned:

Formative evaluation: Classroom discussion during period

Summative evaluation: Research planning segments of all written assignments (term development, source selection, comprehensive assignments)

Sample Page from the I've Got a Hit! Wiki

Available at: <http://ivegotahit.pbworks.com/>

My PBworks Workspaces I've Got a Hit! Upgrade Now!

Wiki Pages & Files Users Settings

VIEW EDIT

★ The Middleman 1x07 - The Cursed Tuba Contingency

last edited by Deborah Schander 2 months, 1 week ago Page history

Basic Information

SHOW TITLE: The Middleman
EPISODE TITLE: [The Cursed Tuba Contingency](#)
PRODUCTION NUMBER: 1x07
DISC NUMBER: 2

CHAPTER WHICH CONTAINS CLIP: 4
CLIP START TIME: 15:06
CLIP END TIME: 16:42
CLIP TOTAL RUN TIME: 1 minute 36 seconds

Note: Times can vary depending on which player you're using to show clips. It's always a good idea to verify start and end times before class.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Wendy and The Middleman are trying to track down a cursed tuba and Ida offers to search the HAYDAR for them. She proudly searches for every reference to the word "tuba" which leads to frequent exclamations of "I've got a hit!" and hours of sorting through irrelevant results. Wendy and The Middleman grow increasingly tired and bored of weeding through the results.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: A couple things: Ida is a robot, the HAYDAR is basically like a souped-up Internet and the tuba in question survived the sinking of the Titanic. It's cursed because its owner saved it and himself instead of other passengers.

LEGAL CONCEPT OR RESEARCH TECHNIQUE CLIP ILLUSTRATES: If you want to save yourself time and a headache, think about your search before you run it -- it'll cut down on the number of results and make them more relevant to what you're actually trying to research.

Additional Information

OTHER WAYS THIS CLIP COULD BE USED:

OTHER CLIPS WITH WHICH SCENE COULD BE PAIRED: Works very effectively when paired with the [Library of Congress scene](#) from *All the President's Men*. Students tend to say the Tuba search method is better because it's electronic, but in this case, Woodward and Bernstein were more effective researchers.

AVAILABLE ONLINE: [Clicker.com Show Page](#)

TRANSCRIPT:

Suggested Sites for Clips

We recommend taking a look at the following recent article for sites and suggestions for video clips: Amy Flick, *Pick a Quick Flick for Class: How to Use Video Clips to Keep Your Legal Research Students Awake*, AALL SPECTRUM, April 2011, at 18.

Video and music clips can be found elsewhere online as well:

C-Span <http://www.c-span.org/>

Find Internet TV, <http://www.Findinternettv.com>

Google Video Search Engine, <http://google.com/video> or <http://video.google.com/>

Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>

NPR <http://NPR.org> (audio)

PBS <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/>

Ted <http://www.Ted.com> (talks and speeches from leaders in all fields, use tags to search)

Vod Pod <http://www.vodpod.com> (television and film, use tags to search)

The American Association of Law Libraries has also produced an Issue Brief on the current DMCA exceptions which allow professors to rip clips to use in class:

<http://www.aallnet.org/aallwash/ib072010.pdf>

Selected Annotated Bibliography

There are numerous law review articles about the law and film, including articles about teaching law and film courses, using film to teach doctrinal and substantive law or legal principles, such as criminal law, evidence or professionalism, narration or storytelling, and explaining litigation involving television or film. Although these articles are useful and relevant to this topic, many are beyond the scope this bibliography.

This bibliography includes a selection of articles which discuss the pedagogical principles and educational theories for using film and television clips in the classroom. These articles are intended to offer a theoretical background and suggestions for best-practices to law teachers who are new to using these techniques in their courses.

Case Studies of Pop Culture Use in Law School Classrooms

Kate Nace Day & Russell G. Murphy, *“Just Trying to Be Human in this Place”*: *Storytelling and Film in the First-Year Law School Classroom*, 39 *STETSON L. REV.* 247 (2009).

This piece discusses how specific films, documentaries, and video clips can be incorporated into the first-year classroom to teach students how to process and understand the moral ambiguities and ethical complexities of the law and being a lawyer. The authors offer some specific suggestions for accomplishing this in a criminal law course.

Joseph W. Dellapenna, *Peasants, Tanners, and Psychiatrists: Using Films to Teach Comparative Law*, 36 *INT'L J. LEGAL INFO.* 156 (2008).

Dellapenna has over a decade of experience teaching comparative law using non-English language film, and in this article, he provides some strategies and insight for using films to teach comparative law.

K.J. Greene, *“There's No Business Like Show Business”*: *Using Multimedia Materials to Teach Entertainment Law*, 52 *ST. LOUIS U. L.J.* 765 (2008).

The author discusses his approach to teaching entertainment law using film and video clips. Examples from film, television, and music are provided to explain principles from copyright law, contract, trademark, and other entertainment law concepts.

Victoria S. Salzmann, *Here's Hulu: How Popular Culture Helps Teach the New Generation of Lawyers*, 42 *MCGEORGE L. REV.* 297 (2011).

This article provides a thorough explanation of the theoretical basis for using references to popular cultural in law teaching, including why such references work well for law students of the millennial generation. The article serves as a must-read guide for any teacher considering incorporating such references in the classroom and offers practical insight, including how to use references to popular culture and challenges that can arise when using the same.

Case Studies of Pop Culture Use in Academic Classrooms or Course Design

Jacqueline Bach, *PROJECT TEACH: Using Reality Shows as a Framework for Teaching Methods Courses*, 10 *CURRICULUM & TEACHING DIALOGUE* 41 (2008).

A case study of a teacher education course using elements of Project Runway challenges to structure course assignments.

Lisa M. Curch, *Using Prime-Time Animation to Engage Students in Courses on Aging*, 31 *GERONTOLOGY & GERIATRIC EDUCATION* 361 (2010).

An examination of how animated programs such as The Simpsons and Futurama can be used to teach topics on aging. Includes student survey results and lists of episodes appropriate to various topics.

Ginger M. Eikmeier, *D'oh! Using The Simpsons to Improve Student Response to Literature*, ENGLISH JOURNAL, March 2008, at 77.

Discussion of the use of The Simpsons in high school English classes, focusing on the activation of prior knowledge to improve retention and comprehension, and the relation of Simpsons episodes with themes in common to classic literature.

Allyson Jule, *Using "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" as a Feminist Teaching Tool*, 22 GENDER & EDUCATION 123 (2010).

An analysis of the use of The Mary Tyler Moore Show to examine the role of women in the workplace in a class of Welsh undergraduates who were previously unfamiliar with the show.

William E. Smith III, *The Use Value of Fight Club in Teaching Theories of Religion*, TEACHING THEOLOGY & RELIGION, April 2008, at 87.

A case study of a class using Fight Club as a semester-long springboard for theoretical approaches to religion.

Christopher Soper, *Rock & Roll Will Never Die: Using Music to Engage Students in the Study of Political Science*, 43 PS: POLITICAL SCIENCE & POLITICS 363 (2010).

Description of one professor's use of popular music to relate to historical and political events from a variety of time periods, including the use of student-suggested songs.

Case Studies of Pop Culture Use in Library Classrooms or Course Design

Charles H. Becker, *Student Values and Research: Are Millennials Really Changing the Future of Reference and Research?*, 49 J. OF LIBR. ADMIN. 341 (2009).

A case study of Millennials and their research habits, preference for experiential learning and consumer-like behavior.

David M. Considine, *From Gutenberg to Gates: Media Matters*, 100 THE SOC. STUD. 63 (2009).

An examination of how the Text, Audience, and Production (TAP) model can influence students' understanding of popular media they are exposed to each day.

Helene E. Gold, *Engaging the Adult Learner: Creating Effective Library Instruction*, 5 LIBR. & THE ACAD. 467 (2005).

An article focusing on the particular needs of adult learners, offering information on how to engage these learners in the traditional classroom as well.

Robert G. Sewell, *Trash or Treasure? Pop Fiction in Academic and Research Libraries*, 45 C. AND RES. LIBR. 540 (1984).

An early article considering the increasing use of pop culture in classes and publications. Includes examples of how libraries collect popular fiction.

Sarah R. Wakefield, *Using Music Sampling to Teach Research Skills*, 33 TEACHING ENG. IN THE TWO YEAR C. 357 (2006).

A brief article offering suggestions on how standard research topics, such as quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing sources, can be taught using the works of P. Diddy.