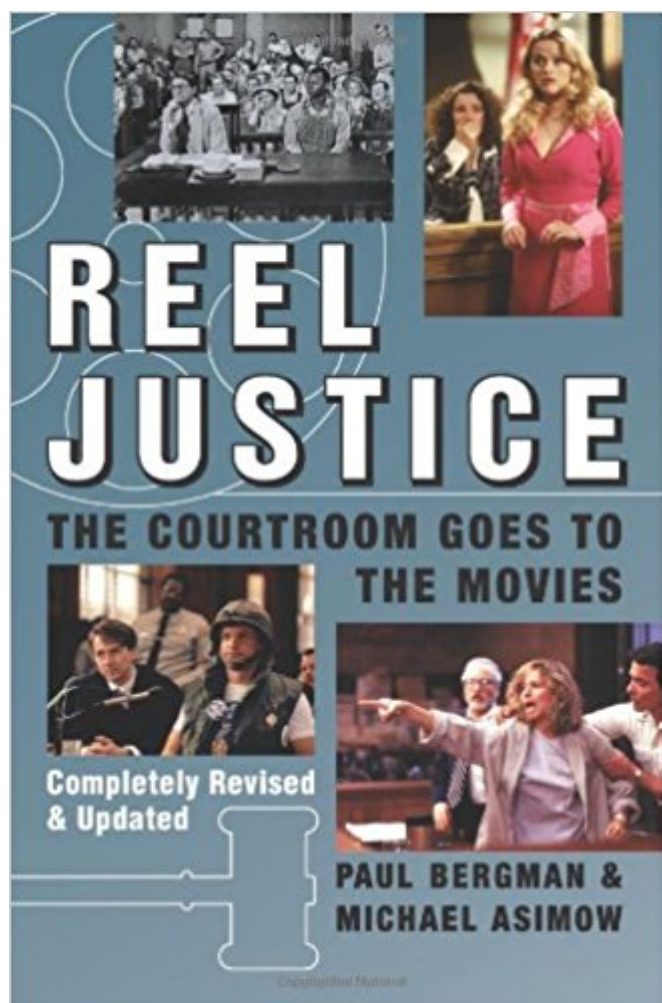


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# Reel Justice: The Courtroom Goes To The Movies



## Synopsis

From the earliest days of the movies, filmmakers have turned to the courtroom for stories because it is an ideal setting for both drama and comedy. Fans of those courtroom movies can turn to *Reel Justice* for a verdict on both recent and classic courtroom films. Informative and entertaining, *Reel Justice* rates trial scenes in films on a one-to-four-gavel scale, with four being a classic and one being "ask for a new trial." Authors Paul Bergman and Michael Asimow, both accomplished law professionals, discuss the cultural messages encoded in the films, point out what went right and wrong in scenes where liberties were taken, and even answer a few legal questions along the way. Completely revised and reformatted from the successful first edition, this new edition of *Reel Justice* includes more than two dozen recent movies as well as many older favorites that weren't covered in the first version. Just a few of the films reviewed: \* *A Time to Kill* \* *Legally Blonde* \* *Philadelphia* \* *Inherit the Wind* \* *A Few Good Men* \* *The Devil's Advocate* \* *I Am Sam* \* *Intolerable Cruelty* \* *Rules of Engagement* \* *Twelve Angry Men* \* *Ghosts of Mississippi* \* *Runaway Jury* *Reel Justice* is an indispensable video guide for film viewers who want the legal lowdown on courtroom scenes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this informative, entertaining, and unique book, the authors, two UCLA law professors, dissect a broad cross section of courtroom films with wit, humor, and professional expertise but without any stilted legal jargon. They organize the films into categories ranging from true stories (*Inherit the Wind*), comedy (*My Cousin Vinny*), and military (*A Few Good Men*) to lawyer/client relationships (*Jagged Edge*), civil cases (*Kramer vs. Kramer*), and unusual judges/jurors (*The Devil and Daniel*

Webster). A succinct plot and character synopsis for each film is followed by a legal analysis of the case that discusses evidence, legal procedures, testimonies, juries, validity of actions by the attorneys, and more. The authors raise a number of provocative questions and suggest that arriving at true justice is not always a straightforward affair. Very enjoyable reading, this book will be appreciated by film enthusiasts as well as by those interested in the various legal, social, and ethical dilemmas in the films. For circulating libraries. Carol J. Binkowski, Bloomfield, N.J. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Paul Bergman is a professor of law emeritus at UCLA Law School and frequently lectures to lawyers and judges on how films depict law and legal culture. He has written numerous articles on the depiction of law and lawyers in films, as well as several books on evidence, trial advocacy, legal counseling, and legal processes for non-lawyers. Michael Asimow is professor of law emeritus at UCLA Law School. He specializes in administrative law and has written numerous books and articles about law and lawyers in movies and television, including *Law and Popular Culture: A Course Book*.

As a lawyer, I did not expect that a book on movie trials, aimed at a popular audience, would have much substance. But I was very pleasantly surprised. The authors, two law professors, do an excellent job of pointing out the numerous errors Hollywood makes when it tries to depict a trial. (Most non-lawyers would be surprised, for example, to learn that *My Cousin Vinny* is much more realistic than *The Verdict*.) The authors' discussions go into real (but not tedious) depth about not only the errors in the way judges, lawyers, etc., behave on film, but also the mistakes scriptwriters make in creating tactics and legal theories for their characters. In addition, the authors helpfully explain what would (most likely) *really* happen in many filmed situations. Because the authors treat each movie at length, this is not an exhaustive filmography. However, all the biggies are here, and the book also contains usefully organized indexes. This would be a great selection for lawyers, film buffs, or anyone who has to serve on a jury.

Please take note: The book has been updated in 2006 so the new edition includes significantly more movie analysis than the earlier copies. After giving a quick synopsis of "courtroom movies" of all kinds...including comedy...these two law professors discuss the legal issues raised by the films. For example: Did the lawyers use a correct basis for an appeal, what are the standards for expert witnesses, was the cross-examination proper, did the judge make legal error in failing to grant a

motion to disqualify the jurors, did a lawyer make unethical statements in his closing argument, etc. Simply a terrific review of legal procedure for those who love the movies.

My wife had been looking for this book for some time and was more than pleased to receive it as a Christmas present. It has been out of stock in local brick and mortar stores for several months. It arrived on time and as expected.

I'm very happy with my purchase. The product was in perfect condition and I received it in a timely manner. I am very satisfied with the product and service provided.

This book delivered what I expected: explanation of legal aspects in movie scripts and analysis of their accuracy.

Few can escape an active filmgoing life without a twisted view of the law. For as many accurate depictions of courtroom behavior as there are in films, there must be dozens that are not even close. Objections that are baseless and would be laughed out of a real court are routinely sustained in films, for example, while thoroughly objectionable conduct, such as attorneys routinely arguing rather than questioning during examinations, goes unchallenged. Law professors Michael Asimow and Paul Bergman have taken their legal skills and their love of films and combined them in what is a relatively unique film and video guide. While they do adopt the trappings of more familiar video guides (such as rating films on a scale up to four gavels), they provide far more considered reviews than one is likely to find in any other guide (with the notable exception of Roger Ebert's). Both authors are professors at the UCLA School of Law, and they use their considerable contacts at the school to the greatest possible advantage, drawing on the years of learning of nationwide experts in various fields of law. "Reel Justice" is both a celebration of the filmed courtroom battle and an examination of the law underlying the films. All too often, the authors expose the legal lunacy in films, pointing out just how egregiously in error the film is. Where a film is correct, they dutifully point that out, too. Though there may be spots in which the layperson finds the going tough, "Reel Justice" is generally accessible to those without a J.D., and it demystifies the legal system that Hollywood strives so valiently to mystify. Probably, though, the best use for the book is after one sees the movie. (Indeed, the authors pull no punches and reveal many endings, though always with a warning to the reader.) In a time when actual courtroom dramas are more accessible to the general public, whether through the televised criminal trial of O.J. Simpson or through Court TV, a

station devoted almost exclusively to televising trials, "Reel Justice" can be a valuable tool for helping a reader separate fact from fantasy. The most serious limitation of "Reel Justice" is that it covers so few films. The depth of the reviews, however, necessitates such a limited selection. Moreover, the rating system serves as an excellent means of seeking out the truly sublime films out there (though there are a few that are not readily available on video).

Narayan of Rebeccasreads highly recommends REEL JUSTICE as a great companion for the courtroom movie buff. "Every third Hollywood movie is bound to be a courtroom drama/ legal thriller." Not 100% true -- every third movie every produced is bound to be one. The fascination with law, lawyers & courtrooms is not restricted to Hollywood -- it also holds true for Bollywood (Hindi movies) & Mollywood -- the Malayalam movie industry over here in Kerala, India -- where I'm from. But how real are the concepts of law, courtroom & lawyers presented in movies? Through a finely selected collection of movies -- law professors & exponents in law & popular culture -- authors Paul Bergman & Michael Asimow explain where fact ends & fiction begins in some of the all-time classic movies from around the world. Though I've seen many of the courtroom classics discussed in REEL JUSTICE, I'm off to pick up CDs of those I'd never heard of.

Courtrooms are the scenes of many of our greatest dramas, both on film and in real life. So it's no surprise that a book reviewing the legal and dramatic merits of dozens of law-related movies is a great read. You learn a lot about the law through the authors' explanations of what famous trial scenes in the movies were based in actual law or not. And you get lots of insights into the making of many excellent movies. Not only did I enjoy this book enormously, I've also used it as a guide for what movies to rent.

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