

The gender and minority composition of new law teachers and AALS Faculty Appointments Register candidates

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In the past three years, nearly 1,300 new law teachers have been hired in the 176 accredited law schools. More than half of the new law teachers appointed in 1993-94 were women with just under half for 1992-93. The article examines the percentages of minority women, women, men and minority men who have become either professors, associate professors, visiting professors and lecturers/instructors for the period 1991 to 1994.

The AALS Faculty Appointments Register candidates submit one page resumes to AALS which are then distributed in the Faculty Appointments Register to all AALS members and other participating law schools. In the last three years the percentages of women and minorities are significantly higher for the successful Register candidates than for the unsuccessful candidates, indicating that women and minorities have more success in the recruitment process than men and non-minority candidates.

However, the AALS Register is not the only place from which law schools can recruit staff. Most of the lecturer/instructor positions appear to be filled through channels other than the AALS faculty recruitment process. The recruitment of new associate and assistant professors has been primarily through the Register. The percentages of women and minorities being recruited from the Register for these positions has not changed significantly over the three year period from 1991 to 1994.

TEACHING METHODS & MEDIA

The living law: popular film as legal text

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There are a large number of recent films that utilise the legal system as a theme. Law and literature has long since found a place in the landscape of legal scholarship. However, the use of the medium of film as a teaching tool in law schools remains a rarity. Films can be used as learning aids to illustrate the legal process. One example is Sweet and Maxwell's film 'A Case through the Courts', which provides an outline of the workings of a tribunal system. Alternatively, popular film can be used to encourage and initiate critical analysis of the legal system and doctrinal exposition.

The University of Westminster in England has developed a module titled 'Film and the Law'. The aims and objectives of the LLB at Westminster are pluralistic and seek to expose the diverse and conflicting demands of the legal profession and the law. Legal subjects are studied in their social context and students are encouraged to experience the 'living law'.

The aims of the 'Film and the Law' module were critically to examine the portrayal of the law and legal personnel in film, to contrast this with reality, to develop a wider critical awareness of the law, to understand and assess the portrayal and the reality of professional ethics and to appreciate any psychological effects of dress, court layout, etc. upon the perceptions of the law. The teaching method involved the viewing of selected feature films, supplemented by directed reading

and post-film seminar discussions.

Students found the module to be user friendly, unthreatening and accessible as an introduction to a variety of issues. Students were found to be able readily to assimilate the issues arising, empathise with the characters involved, be they the down and out lawyer on an impossible case, the accused or the victim, yet still critically analyse and comment on the reality of the situation. By contrasting different films viewed in the module with each other, underlying societal attitudes were revealed. For example, Cher and Paul Newman both play the role of lawyer in the films *Suspect* and *Verdict* respectively. The students were quick to point out that the character played by Newman was able to conquer his inadequacies, whereas the character played by Cher required the assistance of a male to do the same. Students were quite able to distinguish between the film as drama and making more legitimate comments about the role of a lawyer. Whilst the abstract concept of justice causes undergraduates some difficulty, within the context of film students were able to articulate some notion as to what justice means to them.

The use of film in the undergraduate program enables the law to be discussed and analysed from the perspective of the students' pre-existing ideological framework with no prior knowledge expected. The challenge is to build upon this early experience and encourage students to take a critical view of all their subsequent legal study. This approach encourages students to develop their own critical faculties which are an essential feature of an academic legal education.