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TEACHING LAW THROUGH MOVIES

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Lawyers give us great pleasure in movies. Sometimes this occurs in ways that attorneys like to see themselves. For example:

- Thomas More (Paul Scofield) standing up to Henry VIII in *A Man for All Seasons*;
- Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck) resisting social pressures in *To Kill a Mockingbird*;
- The industrious Congressional lawyer (Rob Morrow) who took on NBC in *Quiz Show*; and
- *Gandhi* (Ben Kingsley)—who we forget was a lawyer—fighting to overcome social injustice and religious intolerance in India.

But often, movie lawyers give us pleasures in ways that make bar associations cringe:

- The stagy, hustling Billy Flynn (Richard Gere) in *Chicago*;
- The corrupt union lawyer (Rod Steiger) whose allegiance ran to the mob rather than to his simple, decent brother in *On the Waterfront*;
- The “far out” marijuana-toking lawyer (Jack Nicholson) in *Easy Rider*;
- The attorney (Jim Carrey) who’s a pathological liar trying to salvage his marriage by—get this—telling the truth in *Liar Liar*; and
- In *Jurassic Park*, seeing the T-rex devour the attorney on the porta-potty for—that’s right—comic relief.

Still, movies can provide an engaging way to teach students about legal matters. This article suggests several movies that not only deal with legal topics, but also have artistic merit as films. The best of them have enough ambiguity to foster discussions about the characters’ conduct and about the nature of law and justice. Hopefully, they can entertain, educate, and elevate at the same time.

Why Is Law Cinematic?

Laws govern human nature. But so do the laws of physics. More movies are made about legal matters than physics because the laws we make control basic human rights and responsibilities in ways that average citizens can understand and challenge. They organize society, protect rights, and channel vengeance.

The law is well-suited to the movie medium because it almost always deals with conflict. Legislators engage in give and take to make laws, sometimes with high stakes. Enforcing laws involves a different sort of tension. And laws get interpreted in an adversarial court system that pits skilled advocates against one another. Only one can win.

Some Criteria

This article focuses on movies about the law, lawyers, or courts that could make good teaching tools. Here are my criteria:

- I chose movies with solid critical reputations in the belief that, if you're going to require students to watch something, quality should be a goal.
- The films on this list don't always portray lawyers in a favorable light. For me, that's part of the dialogue.
- I also favor films with some ambiguity, which can stimulate discussion.
- Most of the listed films have been out a while. While it's certainly easier to get kids (and teachers) to watch movies they've heard of, we tend to have preconceived notions about those films or about their stars that skew our perspectives. Older films may have technological limitations, but don't have as much other prejudicial baggage.

There's no objective right or wrong about any of this. Feel free to use other approaches.

The Accuracy Dilemma

Some attorneys dismiss lawyer flicks as inaccurate. That may miss the point. Movies only occasionally depict any profession with meticulous accuracy. Think of films about teachers. Even the good ones aren't textbook manuals on how to teach or behave with students. Last year's *Notes on a Scandal* and *Half Nelson* come to mind. Not many teachers would do what those teachers did. Yet, for many of us, those are good films. Schoolhouse clashes and misconduct involving drugs and sex are cinematic. Preparing lesson plans and grading papers aren't.

Likewise, the lawyer who wins a case in dramatic fashion spent most of his time preparing for that moment. The courtroom conclusion is cinematic, the preparation isn't. The attorney who quibbles about precise points of law in

lawyer movies may have too much hubris. Whether the doctrine of *res ipsa loquitur* or the Rule against Perpetuities is precisely delineated doesn't really matter.

Most of us don't want literal accuracy in our films. Relative accuracy suffices. We're after an entertaining story and engaging sights and sounds. But we don't want the flick to insult our intelligence about an occupation or situation, unless it's designed to subvert our sense of the world (witness the effectiveness of *Borat* or *Fight Club*). The point is that movies can be good or bad, high art or low culture, regardless of literal accuracy.

Starters

Judgment at Nuremberg (1961, 178 min., U) - Amidst the ghosts of Nuremberg's bombed buildings, the 1948 trials passed judgment on the human specters of WW II Nazism. Beyond condemning the Goehring and Eichmanns, the trials weighed the complicity of less visible officials who went along with the horrors of Germany's Third Reich. Stanley Kramer's gripping film creates a composite trial in which a trio of American judges must decide the culpability of four German judges. In scenes both subtle and gut-wrenching, the trial proceeds under the gavel of kindly, calm, observant, but ultimately unyielding Judge Dan Haywood (Spencer Tracy). The four judges in the dock include a bitter Nazi purist (Otto Klemperer) and the stoic, patriotic, and agonized Ernst Janning (memorably played with sad eyes by Burt Lancaster), who sees his better half in Haywood. They are defended by Hans Rolfe (Maximilian Schell in a steely yet nuanced role), a logical advocate who sees this trial as a place to draw the culpability line between Nazi leaders and the German people. They are prosecuted by Col. Lawson (the righteously direct Richard Widmark), who believes that the judges must be held accountable for the terrors of Dachau, irrespective of whether they acted lawfully under German laws and had little actual knowledge of those horrors. Memorable witnesses include a woman (Judy Garland in a brave role), who developed a bond with an aging Jewish man, and a mentally unstable man (the remarkable Montgomery Clift), whose family was victimized by the move toward Arian purity. While much of the movie takes place in long courtroom scenes, it is surprisingly alive. The screenplay gives power to words and the camera effectively uses deep focus and circular pans to measure tension in the room. Kramer adds verisimilitude by showing the remains of Nuremberg (including the site of Hitler's famous rally), graphic films taken by soldiers who liberated concentration camps, and cafés (with hauntingly joyful German singing), and the living quarters of a sad, fallen aristocrat (Marlene Dietrich). While many of Kramer's movies deserve to be overlooked in the early 21st Century, *Judgment's* lessons remain relevant on how ordinary, capable people can justify horrors through patriotism or a perceived sense of national security. And, in a geopolitical sense, how guilty findings risked making Germany less likely to join our fight against a new enemy: Soviet Communism. In short, it's a great courtroom drama about

myriad issues that transcend Nuremberg: When is it fair to judge persons who did not make the law, but merely enforced it? When is it fair to judge people who acted within the law of a defeated country by a victorious country's standards? Where should the culpability line be drawn? All Germans? Those in certain positions of power? The entrepreneurs (including Americans) who helped to rebuild the German war machine between the World Wars? Could the Nuremberg trials have had the effect of the Versailles Treaty after WWI? Could not guilty findings have the ironic effect of easing the German political conscience—and strengthening the anti-Communist wall? More prosaically, how do we feel about the prosecutor's zeal in condemning the defendants? What about the seemingly merciless attack on witnesses by the defense counsel? Do the attorneys take the charges too personally? **CAVEATS:** The movie is nearly three hours long, but can be segmented easily for showing over several classes; one graphic scene shows actual footage of bodies in concentration camps.

- Screenplay: Abby Mann
- Cast: Spencer Tracy (Judge Dan Haywood), Maximilian Schell (Hans Rolfe), Burt Lancaster (Ernst Janning), Richard Widmark (Col. Lawson), Marlene Dietrich (Mme. Bertholt), Judy Garland (Irene Hoffman), Montgomery Clift (Rudolph Petersen), Otto Klemperer (Emil Hahn), Kenneth MacKenna (Judge Norris), Ray Teal (Judge Ives), William Shatner (Capt. Byers)
- Honors: AFI 400, NYT-M, NYT-TT, GG-W (director, actor-drama (Schell)), GG-N (picture-drama, supporting actor (Clift), supporting actress (Garland), promoting int'l understanding), AA-W (adapted screenplay, actor (Schell)), AA-N (film, director, B&W cinematography (Ernest Laszlo), actor (Tracy), supporting actor (Clift), supporting actress (Garland), B&W art direction, editing, B&W costumes), BAFTA-N (British film), NBR-TT, NYFC-W (actor (Schell)), NYFC-N (film, director), DGA-N, AMG 4.5, DDDd

(Note: there is a key to these abbreviations on the last page.)

The Sweet Hereafter (1997, 111 min., R) - Directed by Atom Egoyan, this is a poignant, carefully constructed, and elegant film about the loss of children. Mitchell Stephens (Holm) is a personal injury lawyer made weary by the ever-worsening travails of his drug addicted daughter. Egoyan weaves Mitchell's phone calls from—and reflections on—his desperate daughter together with his efforts to mould the grief of a small town into a law suit after a bus skids off a road into an icy mountain lake, killing several school children. "There is no such thing as an accident," Mitchell tells them, "let me direct your rage." (Ah, tort reform!) But the right thing to do isn't clear cut. The town is torn. The beloved bus driver is caught in the middle, having lost "all the children of my town." One survivor, a teenage singer made lame by the accident (the subtle Sarah Polley), decides to reunite her town at the expense of a perhaps too-close relationship with her father. It's one of the better movies of the '90s, but probably didn't make it to your Cineplex. Some questions about law and lawyering: Why do personal injury and civil rights lawyers try to bring cases on behalf of a group of people rather than individuals? Why are these cases sometimes structured on an "I don't get paid unless you get paid" basis? Does this approach help or hurt the credibility of lawyers? Should an attorney channel a personal dilemma into a lawsuit? **CAVEATS:** The movie has a short shot of a topless woman. Parents who forget they've been naked might object.

- Screenplay: Atom Egoyan from the novel by Russell Banks
- Cast: Ian Holm (Mitchell Stephens), Sarah Polley (Nicole Burnell), Bruce Greenwood (Billy Ansell), Alberta Watson (Risa Walker), Gabrielle Rose (Dolores Driscoll), Tom McCamus (Sam Burnell), Arsinée Khanjian (Wanda Otto)
- Honors: NYT-M, 1001, TFCA-W (film, director, Canadian film, actor (Holm)), TFCA-RU (actress (Polley)), ISA-W (foreign film), NBR-W (cast), NBR-TT, CFF-W (grand jury prize, int'l critics prize), CFF-N (presented), NSFC-RU (film), AA-N (director, adapted screenplay), AMG 5, DDDd

To Kill a Mockingbird (1962, 129 min., U) – You may have heard of this one. While duly praised for cutting to the core of racial bigotry and mob rule, this movie transcends politics. Without doubt, Atticus Finch's (Peck) attempt to defend a black man accused of raping a white girl in the South in the 1930s gives the movie its signature drama. But at the film's heart is a sensitive story about kids learning the ways of the world. Working from Harper Lee's powerful (and only) novel, Mulligan gives us that rarest of films: a high quality, serious drama carried by children who have clearly defined personalities and sensitivities. There's no condescension or overt romanticism. The kids' posture, spacing, movements, and curiosities are remarkably well staged. Subtle details give their lives shades of gray rarely seen in movies about childhood. Badham is especially good as 6 year old Scout who, together with her older brother Jem (Alford) and visiting friend Dill (Megna), size up the mysteries of neighborhood recluse Boo Radley (Duvall), which parallel the larger mysteries of bias regarding the accused Tom (Peters). The film is full of good scenes, from its stylish opening (panning the contents of Jem's cigar box), through Jem's narrow escape at the Radley place, Atticus shooting a rabid dog (it's different than killing a mockingbird), a jail mob scene (which Scout innocently disarms with "I know your boy, Walter. Tell him I said hey."), respect in the galleries for Atticus at the trial's end ("Stand," says the minister. "Your father is passing."), an attack on the Finch kids, to its dramatic ending on Boo's porch. They're all well-filmed by Russell Harlan with carefully chosen long-shots and close-up angles. They're augmented by Scout and Jem's reactions and Elmer Bernstein's careful score. Peck plays the remarkably dignified Atticus with a cold sort of warmth. It's not a perfect movie (or novel). While noble, Atticus may not quite be a reformer. He's a lawyer used to the ways of compromise (he allows the sheriff to cover up Ewell's death at Boo's hands). Scout's observations often seem more like adult remembrances. The tragic Tom is made a little too pathetic and the accusing Ewell (Anderson) too drunk and slimy to fully explain how he could rally his neighbors. If Scout and Jem show us the complexities of Southern life, bigotry alone can't explain Ewell's power. But it's a quintessential American drama. Some questions about law and lawyering: Does bigotry explain the jury's verdict or did the prosecutor show that Tom could have committed the crime? If the latter is true, did the state show Tom's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt? How noble is Atticus? Does he too willingly accept the ways of his town? Or is that the nature of lawyering, keeping some professional distance? Can we admire people who make

convincing arguments in court but set them aside to lead normal lives in complex communities?

- Screenplay: Horton Foote from the Pulitzer Prize novel by Harper Lee
- Cast: Gregory Peck (Atticus Finch), Mary Badham (Scout F.), Philip Alford (Jem F.), John Megna (Dill), James Anderson (Bob Ewell), Brock Peters (Tom), Collin Wilcox Paxton (Mayella E.), William Windom (Pros. Gillmer), Robert Duvall (Boo Radley), Kim Stanley (narrator-the adult Scout)
- Honors: AFI #34, NFR, NYT-M, 1001, WGA #19, BAFTA-W (film-any source & British), AA-W (adapted screenplay, actor (Peck), B&W art direction), AA-N (film, director, supporting actress (Badham), B&W cinematography (Russell Harlan), score (Elmer Bernstein)), GG-W (actor-drama (Peck), original score, picture promoting int'l understanding), GG-N (film-drama, director), WGA-W (screenplay-drama), DGA-N, CFF-W (Gary Cooper Prize), NYFC-N (film, screenplay, actor (Peck)), AMG 5, DDDd

Other Good Law-Related Films (listed alphabetically)

Adam's Rib (1949, 101 min., U) - Sure it's pure Hollywood, but George Cukor's battle-of-the sexes flick works well with today's mainstream audiences because it anticipates the modern TV sit-com pattern of having the guy look dorky, while the woman gets the best lines. It's both smart and corny, pitting two attorneys who happen to be married (old-fashioned Spencer Tracy & ambulance-chasing Katherine Hepburn) against each other in an attempted murder case. That's right, it's a comedy. Even though few attorneys would act like these two, the legal jargon rings true (even if the courtroom scenes don't), as does most of the dialogue. Tracy and Hepburn are so comfortable acting together that you almost feel you're eavesdropping. Judy Holliday is particularly funny as the woman scorned. And Wayne, as the quipping, songwriting neighbor, may simultaneously be the most interesting and annoying character. "Lawyers should never marry other lawyers. It's called inbreeding. It leads to idiot children and other lawyers," he observes. Cukor treats the movie like a stage play. Many long scenes are shot from a stage audience's perspective, using one camera. But there are several nice touches, including Adam and Amanda's believably hammy home movie, a gymnastics demonstration in court, and little passing witticisms like the first juror's occupation (infant head gear). Hepburn has remarkable presence here. Tracy is okay, but overdoes his reactions and gets implausibly flustered for a veteran lawyer, leading to frazzled mispronunciations and Neanderthal logic. His performance and the weak ending limit the movie, but it is fun.

- Screenplay: Ruth Gordon & Garson Kanin
- Cast: Spencer Tracy (Adam Bonner), Katherine Hepburn (Amanda Bonner), Judy Holliday (Doris Attinger), Jean Hagen (Beryl), Tom Ewell (Warren Attinger), David Wayne (Kip)
- Honors: AFI-C #22, NFR, AFI 400, NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, AA-N (screenplay), GG-N (supporting actress (Holliday)), NYFC-N (actress (Holliday)), WGA-N (screenplay-comedy), AMG 5, DDDD

Anatomy of a Murder (1959, 161 min., U) - *Anatomy* begins with Duke Ellington's jazzy score playing over the famous segmented body graphic that

looks like the dark side of a Matisse cutout. We meet Paul Biegler (Stewart), an attorney “too pure for the impurities of the law,” who prefers fishing to clients. He is asked to represent cocky Lt. Manion (Gazarra), a soldier accused of killing a pub owner who may have raped his flirtatious wife Laura (Remick). We root for the likeable Stewart in his battle against Dancer (Scott in his debut), the “big city” prosecutor (from the big city of Lansing, Michigan). But director Otto Preminger leaves us less sure about his case. The characters ring true, the acting is solid, and most scenes have an authentic feel. Preminger is careful not to spell out the true guilt or innocence of either of the Manions, even once the verdict is read. It’s that ambiguity that makes the movie good. (Otherwise, the story doesn’t have much complexity, the twist about the victim’s daughter doesn’t rise to Hitchcock’s level, and the evidence presented in court, for and against Manion’s “irresistible impulse,” isn’t very convincing.) Preminger liked to push censors’ buttons and the film wins praise for its candid discussion of rape, a novelty in Hollywood movies up to that time. Also, as many commentators have noted, the kindly, capable judge is played a former staffer in the Army-McCarthy hearings, Joseph Welch, who is famous for asking Sen. Joe McCarthy, “Have you no shame, Senator?” The film is based on a book written by a former Michigan Supreme Court justice.

- Screenplay: Wendell Mayes & John D. Voelker from the novel by “Robert Traver” (Michigan Supreme Court Justice Voelker)
- Cast: James Stewart (Paul Biegler), Lee Remick (Laura Manion), Ben Gazarra (Lt. Manion), George C. Scott (Claude Dancer), Joseph Welch (Judge Weaver), Arthur O’Connell (Pamell), Eve Arden (Maida), Katheryn Grant (Mary Pilant), Murray Hamilton (Al Pacquette), Duke Ellington (Pie-eye, cameo)
- Honors: F:CC 150, AFI 400, NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, NBR-TT, NYFC-W (screenplay, actor (Stewart)), NYFC-N (film, director), VFF-W (actor (Stewart)), AA-N (film, adapted screenplay, B&W cinematography (Sam Leavitt), actor (Stewart), supporting actor (O’Connell), supporting actor (Scott), editing), GG-N (film-drama, director, actress-drama (Remick), supporting actor (Welch)), BAFTA (British film), DGA-N, WGA-N (screenplay-drama), AMG 5, DDDD

Breaker Morant (1980, 107 min., PG) – Bruce Beresford’s film was part of the Australian New Wave of the 1980s. The movie has a bland countryside setting, yet it’s beautifully filmed. Reminiscent of Kubrick’s *Paths of Glory*, the inadvertent wartime execution of a German during the Boer War lead the British government to sacrifice three Australian soldiers, including Morant (Woodward). With an immediate flashback, the story grabs you and forces your concentration. Morant may be too glib for the other mercenaries, since the story is told by a survivor who lionized him. But the film does a good job making Morant human by showing the hero as impetuous, callous, and vengeful. Beresford doesn’t let it get too complex and the movie may not be completely fair to the British and their tactics for ending the War. Americans may see queasy parallels to My Lai and Abu Grahib.

- Screenplay: Bruce Beresford, Jonathan Hardy, & David Stevens from the play by Kenneth Ross
- Cast: Edward Woodward (Morant), Bryan Brown (Lt. Peter Hancock), Lewis Fitz-Gerald (Lt. George Witton), Jack Thompson (Major Thomas), John Waters (Capt. Taylor)

- Honors: NYT-M, CFF-W (supporting actor (Thompson)), NBR-TT, GG-N (foreign film), NYFC-N (foreign film), AA-N (adapted screenplay), AMG 4.5, DDDD

Fury (1936, 91 min., U) - Returning to themes from *M*, Fritz Lang not only coolly studies mob mentality in *Fury*, but he couples it with a victim's vengeance. Average Joe (Tracy) is an optimistic, likeable guy who works hard at his gas station to join his fiancé (Sidney, who's good) in another town. On his trip, he finds himself wrongly charged with a kidnapping as an outsider in a small town. Fueled by gossip and egged on by impetuous Dawson (Cabot), a mob forms and storms and torches the jail where he's held, overwhelming the sheriff (Ellis) who tries to maintain order. The movie then shifts gears to a story of cover-up and retaliation. While it has flaws—Tracy's transformation seems too abrupt and fierce, the courtroom scenes are implausible, and the ending forced by the studio is weak—it works pretty well. *Fury's* lessons seem abstract from the perspective of the first decade of the 21st Century. But there were over 5,000 lynchings in late-19th and early-20th Century America. A point obviously not lost on cynical émigré Fritz Lang. As Mark Deming (AMG) notes, Lang finds the disturbing undercurrents not seen in Frank Capra's heartland.

- Screenplay: Bartlett Cormack & Fritz Lang from a story "Mob Rule" by Norman Krasna
- Cast: Spencer Tracy (Joe Wilson), Sylvia Sydney (Katherine), Bruce Cabot (Kirby Dawson), Walter Abel (district attorney), Edward Ellis (Sheriff)
- Honors: NFR, NYFC-W (film), NYFC-N (director), AFI 400, F:CC 150, NYT-M, NYT-TT, NBR-TT, AA-N (original story), AMG 4, DDDD

Inherit the Wind (1960, 128 min., PG) - Stanley Kramer can wear his left-leaning sentiments on his sleeve, but this paraphrased account of the 1925 Scopes "Monkey" Trial pits two top lawyers against one another in a case that continues to reverberate. Populist former presidential candidate Matthew Harrison Brady (March channeling William Jennings Bryan) is brought in to prosecute a teacher who violates a local ordinance by teaching evolution. Chicago lawyer Henry Drummond (Tracy playing Clarence Darrow) is hired by outsiders to defend Cates. Both attorneys have larger interests. The trial scarcely mentions the particulars of the offense. Brady is a decent but windy man who defends Genesis and biblical creation against the forces of agnostic science. "I'm more concerned with the Rock of Ages than the ages of rocks," he quips. Drummond, as played by Hollywood's Everyman (Tracy), is the sensible Ohioan who favors broad expression in speech ("I don't swear for the hell of it.") and intellectual inquiry. Gene Kelley plays E.K. Hornbeck, the reincarnation of H.L. Menken, a cynical reporter who takes Cates's side. It's a good, well-written, and very well-acted movie. Some might find the filmmaker's bias in making Brady more blustering and demagogic than Drummond, especially since anti-science forces remain strong in America. But witnesses to the actual trial said as much, especially since the aging Bryan was no longer a good match for the clever Darrow. Fairly or unfairly, Kramer makes it clear that Brady is in consort with the hicks, but also shows that Brady can rise above the hellfire of the local preacher (Akins) with his "inherit the wind"

speech against preaching damnation. The movie is fodder for discussions of courts, crimes, lawyerly tactics, and one or two larger issues.

- Screenplay: Harold Jacob Smith & Ned Young from the play by Robert E. Lee & Jerome Lawrence
- Cast: Spencer Tracy (Harry Drummond), Fredric March (Matthew Harrison Brady), Gene Kelly (E.K. Hornbeck), Florence Eldridge (Sarah Brady), Dick York (Bert Cates), Donna Anderson (Rachel Brown), Harry Morgan (Judge), Claude Akins (Rev. Brown)
- Honors: NYT-M, NYT-TT, BAFTA-W (British film), NBR-TT (film), GG-W (special achievement (Kramer)), GG-N (film-drama, actor-drama (Tracy)), BFF-W (actor (March)), NYFC-N (film, director, screenplay, actor (March)), AA-N (adapted screenplay, actor (Tracy), B&W cinematography (Ernest Laszlo), editing), AMG 4.5, DDDD

M (1931, 117 min., U) - "Gentlemen, the police are looking for the murderer in our ranks," says arch-criminal Schraenker as he exhorts the underworld to capture a child killer, thereby reducing the bad-for-business attention being paid by cops. In this great, striking, ironic film (the ancestor of all *film noirs*) by Fritz Lang, the child-molesting killer's (the memorable Lorre) identity isn't a mystery; he whistles a spooky tune from Grieg's *Peer Gynt* as he closes in on victims. Nor are the killings in doubt, despite being left to our imagination: a child's ball rolls; a balloon tangles in the phone lines; the killer's silhouette shadows a reward poster. *M* instead raises myriad social issues as the police turn to beggars—while criminals separately work together—to nab the killer. The bug-eyed murderer is despicable, but also hapless, friendless, and pitted against an opportunistic mob. *M* is an early talkie that's often eerily quiet. The acting is quite good and it's full of striking faces and clever photography, including scenes of a trial held by criminals. One criminal presents an elegant defense while the criminal mob seeks vengeance on a different form of offender. The film was based on the true story of a Düsseldorf killer (about whom Randy Newman later wrote a haunting song). Unlike Lorre's character, the real killer voiced no remorse. In another note, Gründgrens was the real life model for the great 1981 film *Mephisto*. The actor committed suicide when he was unable to secure work after the Nazis fell.

- Screenplay: Thea von Harbou, Paul Falkenberg, Fritz Lang
- Cast: Peter Lorre (Hans Becker, the murderer "M"), Gustaf Gründgrens (Schraenker), Otto Wernicke (Lohmann), Rudolph Blumner ("barrister"), Georg John (balloon seller)
- Honors: F:CC 150, NYT-M, 1001, NBR-N (foreign film), AMG 5, DDDDD

My Cousin Vinny (1992, 120 min., R) - An inadvertent tuna heist leads to murder charges for a pair of college-aged guys (Macchio & Whitfield) traveling through Alabama in this comedy directed by Jonathan Lynn. One of the boys calls on his cousin Vinny (Pesci), a Brooklyn native whose seven years of legal experience, to date, involved trying to pass the bar seven times. Pesci represents the "two yoots" with unlikely panache and Tomei is a revelation as Vinny's fiancée, a girl who knows her cars. While the comedy plays pretty broad, there are clever moments (as when Vinny, being taken to jail for contempt of court, whistles "Dixie"). The movie has predictable elements, but doesn't make all southerners into hicks the way you might expect. The tone is

good-natured. And the tour of criminal procedure—from arraignment through trial—is more instructive than in many dramas. The movie is rated R for language. Of course, kids know and use these words, but some parents might prefer more limited vocabularies. It's a problem you seldom have with heavily censored (and often less realistic) older movies.

- Screenplay: Dale Launer
- Cast: Joe Pesci (Vinny Gambini), Marisa Tomei (Mona Lisa Vito), Fred Gwynne (Judge Haller), Ralph Macchio (Bill Gambini), Mitchell Whitfield (Stan Rothenstein), Lane Smith (Prosecutor Trotter), Bruce McGill (Sheriff Farley)
- Honors: AA-W (supporting actress (Tomei)), AMG 3, DDDd

The Onion Field (1979, 126 min., R) - Early in this study of how a crime can haunt a cop, there's a gripping scene in which two criminals force two cops into an onion field, where one officer (Danson) is executed. Based on a true story, we watch the surviving cop's (Savage) psychological distress over not saving his partner and the fits and starts of the justice system for the criminals. The film features strong performances by Woods as the more psychopathic criminal and Savage as the haunted cop. Told from the perspective of an ex-cop, this quality movie raises questions about disharmony between legal rights and justice.

- Screenplay: Joseph Wambaugh from his book
- Cast: James Woods (Greg Powell), John Savage (Karl Hattinger), Franklin Seales (Jimmy Smith), Ted Danson (Ian Campbell), Christopher Lloyd (inmate)
- Honors: NYFC-N (supporting actor (Woods)), GG-N (actor-drama (Woods)), AMG 4, DDDD

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*) (1928, 90 min., U) - Directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer, this wrenching film depicts the inquisition-like trial of a peasant girl. The courtroom drama serves as a fine contrast to the Anglo-American system that developed, in part, as a reaction to the priestly courts of Joan's time. It's also a chance to see one of the most stunning acting performances of all time: Renée Falconetti as Joan. The back story: During the 100 Years War between England and France, a peasant girl—Jeanette from the small French town of Arc—claimed to hear the voices of Archangel Michael and others. The voices told her that dauphin Charles was France's rightful ruler and that she should dress as a man and lead forces on his behalf. Charles was skeptical, but used Jeanne's charisma (more than her military skills) to rally troops to victory. Jeanne was captured and put on trial by clergy who were loyal to the British. Charles did little to help her. That's where this silent movie begins. Dreyer used carefully selected transcripts of Jeanne's heresy trial (she was accused of claiming that God spoke directly to her, rather than through the clergy—sacrilege at the time). Extreme close-ups seem to take us into the subject's psyche, displaying the tone and motivation of each character. The movie isn't objective. The smirking clergy inquisitors smugly doubt Joan's divine inspiration. And stage actress Falconetti, in her only significant movie role, plays Jeanne as an intense, overwhelmed, relentlessly distraught, and, yes, saintly woman. She sustains this raw performance throughout the film as countless tears drop from her wide, rapturous eyes. "Memorable" is an overused word, but watch this film you will never forget her

face. During most of movie, there are no distractions. Few wide shots or pans establish the place or time. It's just faces. But the film culminates in an artful martyrdom scene in which Dreyer's camera pulls back from the close-ups that dominate the film in favor of long and short shots of Jeanne's fire and its observers, sometimes filmed from above or below. The film plays as a powerful indictment of a world without reason in which a religious zealot ironically comes up against orthodoxy.

- Screenplay: Carl Theodor Dreyer
- Cast: Renée Falconetti (Jeanne d'Arc), Eugène Silvain (Bishop Couchon), Antinin Artaud (Jean Massieu), Maurice Schutz (Nicholas Loyseleur), Ravet (Jean Beaupère)
- Honors: S&S-D 1952 #13, S&S-C 1952 #7, S&S-C 1972 #7, S&S-C 1982 #16, S&S-D 1992 #9, S&S-C 1992 #6, S&S-C 2002 #14, F:CC 150, 1001, NBR-W (foreign film), AMG 5, DDDd

Paths of Glory (1957, 87 min., U) - Stanley Kubrick begins to show his amazing range here, as well as his willingness to take on unpopular topics, helping to pave the way for later filmmakers. Based on an actual episode in WW I, this classic anti-war story dispassionately dissects military arrogance. Dax (Douglas) commands French troops against the Germans. When his overmatched soldiers retreat from an attack that spells certain death, he must select three for court martial and defend them. The film turns war clichés on their heads. Brave men face execution for cowardice. There are many good touches, including the intense battle scenes which make the fear of death palpable, a striking execution, and a moving scene at the end in which a German girl (Christian, Kubrick's first wife) is forced to sing to the French soldiers at a bar. While Kirk Douglas can be a hammy actor, the surrounding film is hauntingly effective. The film is a little heavy-handed at times and was banned in France and in the U.S. military for several years.

- Screenplay: Stanley Kubrick, Calder Willingham, & Jim Thompson from the novel by Humphrey Cobb
- Cast: Kirk Douglas (Col. Dax); Ralph Meeker (Corp. Paris); Adolphe Menjou (Gen. Broulard), Susanne Christian (German girl)
- Honors: NFR, AFI 400, NYT-M, 1001, BAFTA (film-any source & British), WGA-N (screenplay-drama), AMG 4.5, DDDD

The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946, 113 min., U) - "Yellow's a color you figure on in a murder," notes a slippery attorney (Cronyn) in this pulp gem by Tay Garnett. Garnett's version of James M. Cain's classic is better than Bob Rafelson's 1981 flick (which isn't bad). The film gives students a feel for that great American film genre with the French name, *film noir*. Drifter Frank (Garfield) comes to work at a diner for a pudgy, aging, penny-pincher named Nick (Kellaway) and his implausibly well-dressed, impossibly sexy, young wife Cora (Turner). As the movie warms up, we get a sexually charged string of schemes, double crosses, and surprises. There's great tension. A cat has one less life than Nick. The lovers are only sometimes in love; you won't catch either one smiling. Two attorneys (Ames & Cronyn) show their wiles as the lovers' plans unfold in unexpected ways. There's a motive that didn't motivate anyone (Nick's new insurance policy). Cora's angry confession is used against

the couple twice, but not really. The schemers must pay a price, but the gas chamber awaits the wrong crime. The film has weaknesses (Turner's acting and appearance are mannered, the melodrama is thick, and there's nothing subtle about the direction or music), but they don't matter much. This *Postman* delivers. Cain is also the source of two other pulp movie classics, *Double Indemnity* and *Mildred Pierce*.

- Screenplay: Niven Busch & Harry Ruskin from the novel by James M. Cain
- Cast: Lana Turner (Cora Smith), John Garfield (Frank Chambers), Cecil Kellaway (Nick Smith), Hume Cronyn (Defense Atty. Arthur Keats), Leon Ames (D.A. Kyle Sackett)
- Honors: NYT-M, 1001, AMG 4.5, DDDD

Rashomon (1950, 90 min., PG-13) - The great Akira Kurosawa tells the story of a possible rape and murder from at least four perspectives in this masterpiece about the deceptive nature of memory and the difficulty in knowing truth. Seeking shelter from a storm, a woodcutter (Shimura) and priest (Chiaki) describe a criminal trial while a peasant (Ueda) listens. The characters include a bandit (Mifune) who may be a rapist and murderer, a woman (Kyô) who may be a rape victim and/or a murderer, a dead samurai (Mori) who may have been killed in a duel or committed suicide, and a woodsman witness whose objectivity can be questioned. The nihilism is tempered by a baby's appearance at the end. *Rashomon* is pensive, yet highly entertaining, with Kurosawa's typically strong visuals coupled with effective, Bolero-like music by Fumio Hayasaka. Mifune's manic acting seems to fit his role as the bandit. *Rashomon's* Golden Lion at the VFF led to Western interest in Kurosawa's films. It effectively highlights the difficulty in finding truth. *Rashomon* is the name of the decrepit gate where the characters gather to tell their stories.

- Screenplay: Shinobu Hashimoto & Kurosawa, from the short story "Yabu no Naka" and the novel *Rasho-Mon* by Ryunosuke Akutagawa
- Cast: Toshiro Mifune (Tajomaru, the bandit), Machiko Kyô (Masako, the woman), Masayuki Mori (Takehero, samurai), Takashi Shimura (woodcutter), Minoru Chiaki (priest), Kichijiro Ueda (peasant), Funiko Homma (medium)
- Honors: S&S-D 1992 #9, S&S-C 2002 #13, S&S-D 2002 #9, NYT-M, 1001, VFF-W (Golden Lion, foreign film), AA-W (foreign film, honorary (Kurosawa)), AA-N (art direction), NBR-W (foreign film, director), NYFC-N (foreign film), DGA-N, AMG 5, DDDDD

The Thin Blue Line (1988, 101 min., U) - In one of the best documentaries ever made, the camera's unblinking eye studies two men involved in the 1976 murder of a Dallas police officer. The title comes from the "thin blue line of police between the public and anarchy" mentioned by Prosecutor Mulder, as recalled by the trial judge, the son of an FBI agent. This film differs from director Errol Morris's other work by staging reenactments in addition to the interviews. But they're brief and never done for emotional manipulation. 28 year old Randall Adams—a Columbus native—with no history of violence, was convicted and placed on death row for the crime. He shows no remorse, but did he pull the trigger? David Harris was, at 16, already a career criminal. He initially bragged about the killing (it involved his car and his pistol, both stolen), but then pointed his finger at Adams. Harris was interviewed from a cell on death row in California, where he was incarcerated (and later executed)

for an unrelated, later murder. Since he could rationalize his actions without conscience, did he really commit the crime? Did an egotistical prosecutor manipulate charges and witnesses, recognizing that the callow Harris couldn't receive the death penalty? There is a haunting final interview with Harris just before the credits roll. One flaw is that Mulder was not interviewed. Presumably, he refused. Music by Philip Glass contributes to the haunted mood.

- Screenplay: Errol Morris
- Participants: Randall Adams, David Harris
- Honors: NFR, NYT-M, 1001, NBR-W (documentary), NYFC-W (documentary), ISA-N (film, director), EAP (screenplay), AMG 5, DDDD

12 Angry Men (1957, 96 min., U) - Beyond a reasonable doubt meets the mob mentality and good prevails in Sidney Lumet's debut as a feature film director. A skilled cast, a succinct script, and clever camerawork make this jury room drama memorable and lively even though its outcome is fairly obvious from the start. There are several nice touches and little wasted motion. The film, which takes place in a murder trial jury room on a hot summer afternoon—with the defendant's life and death in the balance—reaches a crescendo with the angry Lee J. Cobb as the last convert. Along the way, we get both credible drama and stagy speeches. In a nice closing touch, we watch the jurors leave the shared intensity of the jury room and unceremoniously go down the courthouse stairs back to their separate worlds.

- Screenplay: Reginald Rose from his television play
- Cast: Martin Balsam (Juror #1), John Fiedler (#2), Lee J. Cobb (#3), E.G. Marshall (#4), Jack Klugman (#5), Edward Binns (#6), Jack Warden (#7), Henry Fonda (#8), Joseph Sweeney (#9), Ed Begley (#10), George Voskovec (#11), Robert Webber (#12)
- Honors: AFI 400, NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, BFF-W (Golden Bear), BAFTA-W (film any source & British, foreign actor (Fonda)), EAP (screenplay), AA-N (film, director, adapted screenplay), GG-N (film-drama, director, actor, supporting actor), NYFC-N (film, director, actor (Fonda)), NBR-TT, DGA-N, AMG 4.5, DDDD

Witness for the Prosecution (1957, 116 min., U) - This one doesn't have the courthouse verisimilitude of *Judgment at Nuremberg* or *12 Angry Men*. You always feel you're watching a staged performance, albeit one that's well acted. And the manipulations of two key characters are implausible on reflection. Still, *Witness for the Prosecution* is witty and entertaining in director Billy Wilder's way. The movie opens as gruff barrister Wilfrid Robarts (Laughton) returns from the hospital, aided by a chatty nurse (Lanchester, Laughton's real life spouse). "If I'd known how much you talked, I'd never have come out of my coma," Wilfrid tells her. A prospective client shows up, one Leonard Vole (Power) who is accused of murdering a dowager for her inheritance. Vole, who seems incredulous about the charges, says, "This is England. You don't get arrested for something you haven't done." "We try not to make a habit of it," Wilfrid wryly replies. He adds, "I never object to police work except once in a while in court." Thus, despite the serious charges, the early scenes have a playful quality. The mystery deepens when Vole's German wife (Dietrich) shows up. She seems indifferent to his plight and Wilfrid is reluctant to call her as an alibi witness. Wilfrid and Vole are both surprised

when Dietrich shows up as the titular witness for the prosecution. Her motives and Wilfrid's tentative health become the film's central concerns. But the Wilder wit remains. In objecting to the prosecutor's (Thatcher) leading questions, Wilfrid snipes, "If he insists on answering his own questions, then the presence of a witness would seem superfluous." It's a Hollywood trial, with shades of reality.

- Screenplay: Billy Wilder, Harry Kurnitz, & Lawrence B. Marcus from the play and short story by Agatha Christie
- Cast: Charles Laughton (Wilfrid Robarts), Tyrone Power (Leonard Vole), Marlene Dietrich (Christine Helm Vole), Elsa Lanchester (Miss Plimsoll), Torin Thatcher (Meyers), Una O'Connor (Janet MacKenzie), Henry Daniell (Mayhew)
- Honors: GG-W (supporting actress (Lanchester)), GG-N (film-drama, director, actor-drama (Laughton), actress-drama (Dietrich)), AA-N (film, director, actor (Laughton), supporting actress (Lanchester), editing, sound), DGA-N, AMG 4.5, DDDD

The Second Tier (listed alphabetically)

While not as strong as the movies already listed, each of these films has selective potential as a teaching tool.

Amistad (1997, 152 min., R) - This is Steven Spielberg's take on the uprising on the eponymous slave ship, the courtroom drama that follows, and the role played by two presidents (Hopkins as J.Q. Adams and Hawthorne as Van Buren). The film is solid, albeit preachy.

- Screenplay: David H. Franzoni
- Cast: Djimon Hounsou (Cinque), Anthony Hopkins (John Quincy Adams), Morgan Freeman (Theodore Joadson), Mathew McConaughey (Baldwin), Nigel Hawthorne (Martin Van Buren), Arliss Howard (John C. Calhoun)
- Honors: BFCA-TT, BFCA-W (supporting actor (Hopkins)), EFA-W (Euro achievement in world cinema), GG-N (film-drama, director, actor-drama (Hounsou), supporting actor (Hopkins)), DGA-N, AA-N (supporting actor (Hopkins), cinematography (Janusz Kaminiski), original score, costumes), CFC-N (supporting actor (Hopkins), promising actor (Hounsou)), SAG-N (supporting actor (Hopkins)), ASC-N (cinematography), AMG 2.5, DDD

The Jagged Edge (1985, 108 min., R) - While filmed like a TV movie and not particularly original, Richard Marquand's *noirish* thriller provides mild entertainment by dangling uncertainty from start to finish. A man (Bridges) may have killed his heiress wife and may want his reluctant defense attorney (Close) to fall for him. It's Close who's on the edge, defending a new lover who may ultimately turn on her (if he's a killer) against a D.A. who she knows has a history of hiding evidence. Robert Loggia does a good job as a crass private dick. The story has a nice twist at trial.

- Screenplay: Joe Eszterhas
- Cast: Jeff Bridges (Jack), Glenn Close (Teddy), Peter Coyote (D.A.), Robert Loggia (Sam), Leigh Taylor-Young (Virginia)
- Honors: AA-N (supporting actor (Robert Loggia)), AMG 4, DDD

The Paper Chase (1973, 111 min., PG) – “Mr. Hart, state the facts of the case of *Hawkins v. McGee*.” So begins the movie. And so began law school for many of us. The law school scenes and pressures ring pretty true, even if some of the characters are stereotypes and the romance with the professor’s daughter is contrived. Houseman plays himself well as the domineering contracts professor. He is by far the film’s most memorable character.

- Screenplay: James Bridges from the novel by John Jay Osborn Jr.
- Cast: John Houseman (Prof. Kingsfield), Timothy Bottoms (Hart), Lindsay Wagner (Susan), Edward Herrmann (Anderson)
- Honors: AA-W (supporting actor (Houseman)), AA-N (adapted screenplay, sound), NBR-W (supporting actor (Houseman)), GG-W (supporting actor (Houseman)), WGA-N (adapted screenplay), NYFC-N (supporting actor (Houseman)), AMG 4, DDDd

A Passage to India (1984, 163 min., PG) – Patience is rewarded in David Lean’s films and this is no exception. The first half masquerades as a lush travelogue, but, except for contrasting British pomp with Indian poverty, it’s not especially interesting. It’s like a TV movie that TV couldn’t afford. However, once Miss Quested (Davis) and Dr. Aziz (Banerjee) touch hands at the Marabar Caves, the film becomes a good study in class differences and colonial expectations. The prim English woman longs to discover India’s unsettling ways, but she’s skittish and faint. We see her frightened by monkeys at an erotic temple. After stumbling from the Caves, she involves Aziz in a rape charge. Lean is no fan of empires, but he makes the British so patronizing that it smacks of cliché and overstatement. He also makes Aziz so subservient and wide-eyed that he seems ridiculous. The Brits rally to the uncertain Quested, sure that something happened. Was this much ado about nothing? The trial is gripping and the aftermath has good touches.

- Screenplay: David Lean from the novel by E.M. Forster
- Cast: Judy Davis (Adela Quested), Victor Banerjee (Dr. Aziz), Peggy Ashcroft (Mrs. Moore), James Fox (Fielding), Richard Wilson (Turton), Michael Culver (McBryde), Nigel Havers (Ronny Heaslop), Alec Guinness (Dr. Godbole)
- Honors: NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, NBR-W (film, director, actor (Banerjee), actress (Ashcroft)), NYFC-W (film, director, actress (Ashcroft)), GG-W (foreign film, supporting actress (Ashcroft), score (Maurice Jarre)), GG-N (director, screenplay), AA-W (supporting actress (Ashcroft), original score), AA-N (film, director, adapted screenplay, cinematography (Ernest Day), actress (Davis), editing, art direction, sound, costumes), BAFTA-W (actress (Ashcroft)), BAFTA-N (film, cinematography, supporting actor (Fox), production design, score, costumes), LAFC-W (supporting actress (Ashcroft)), DGA-N, WGA-N (adapted screenplay), AMG 4.5, DDDd

Le Procès de Jeanne d’Arc (The Trial of Joan of Arc) (1962, 68 min., U) – Using a succinct narrative based on Jeanne’s heresy trial transcripts, Robert Bresson gives us a more combative, wily, and heroic (albeit equally austere) Jeanne than we saw in Dreyer’s great film listed earlier. As her inquisitors try to trip her over matters of perceived faith, Jeanne gives prompt answers about the visions from God that led her to rally France against English occupiers. The scenes are short, crisp, and never melodramatic, despite the charged subject matter. Eavesdroppers and asides help to complete the picture.

- Screenplay: Robert Bresson from the transcripts of Jeanne d’Arc’s trial

- Cast: Florence Carrez (Jeanne d'Arc), E.R. Pratt (Warwick), Donald O'Brien (English priest)
- Honors: CFF-W (special jury prize), AMG 3.5, DDDd

Reversal of Fortune (1990, 111 min., R) - Barbet Schroeder made a quality movie that went behind the '80s tabloid story. Newport Aristocrat Claus von Bülow (Irons) was tried twice for allegedly trying to kill his very rich—and now very comatose—wife Sunny (Close). Irons is remarkably good. In a clever touch, Sunny narrates the film from behind her clouds, but provides no answers.

- Screenplay: Nicholas Kazan from the book by Alan Dershowitz
- Cast: Jeremy Irons (Claus von Bülow), Glenn Close (Sunny von Bülow), Ron Silver (Alan Dershowitz), Uta Hagen (Maria)
- Honors: NBR #5, NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, LAFC-W (screenplay, actor (Irons)), NSFC-W (actor (Irons)), GG-W (actor-drama (Irons)), GG-N (film-drama, director, screenplay), AA-W (actor (Irons)), AA-N (director, adapted screenplay), NYFC-N (director), WGA-N (adapted screenplay), CFC-N (actor (Irons)), AMG 4, DDDd

The Shawshank Redemption (1994, 143 min., R) - Frank Darabont's directorial debut reflects much of the best and some of the worst of mainstream Hollywood moviemaking. On the plus side, it is an entertaining, well-filmed story that's solidly acted by the key cast members. Andy (Robbins), a banker, is wrongly sent to prison for killing his wife and her paramour. While there, Andy's remarkable patience and calculation gradually become clear to the viewer. He helps the warden and his guards with their finances to win their support to build a library while hatching a secret plan, notably involving Rita Hayworth, his prison-issue Bible, and a geologist's hammer. There's a twist involving the death of a young inmate that Andy tutors, a likeable scene where Andy wins his fellow cons' respect by winning them a case of beer, a nice touch involving a tin left for Andy's inmate friend Red (Freeman), and a liberating ending. It could have been a great film. Unfortunately, trite scenes undermine the movie's intelligence. Not wanting to leave the story's success to chance, Darabont and King contrive a march of horrors to heighten the good versus evil structure that they believe is necessary for a mass audience. Yes, there were prisons as relentlessly gray and decrepit as this one (it was filmed at Ohio's closed Mansfield Reformatory), but why reenact every prison cliché? We get worms in food, rats in the corridors, homosexual rapes, a venal warden, guards without an iota of humanity, and politicians whose generosity (sending books to the prison library) is only to "quiet" an inmate that nobody hears. It's selective prison life. Make it seem worse than it is to reform it. A new inmate is so acutely aware of his predicament that he cries; yet he seems unaware that wailing "I want my mommy" just might not engender sympathy. He's beaten and left to die by guards (and inmates). An aging inmate (Whitmore) fears release on parole. Rather than hint at his difficulty in adjusting to the outside world, we get foreshadowing that he'll kill himself. In case we miss the point, we then see his suicide, replete with pensive music. If that still didn't hit home, Red explains it, get this, to fellow inmates (and to us stupid viewers). Prison is a hell hole home. There's no place like home. The inmates aren't such bad guys—okay they killed and robbed people—but they pitch in for the library

and universally appreciate hearing Mozart's *Figaro* when Andy commandeers prison loudspeakers. The loutish guards and warden didn't share the artistic warmth. Such overkill denies this overlong film a loftier place in movie history. Interestingly, the movie became a word-of-mouth video store phenomenon after doing paltry business in theaters.

- Screenplay: Frank Darabont from the novella *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* by Stephen King
- Cast: Tim Robbins (Andy Dufresne) Morgan Freeman (Red), Bob Gunton (Warden), Clancy Brown (Capt. Hadley), James Whitmore (Brooks), Gil Bellows (Tommy)
- Honors: AFI 400, 1001, WGA #22, NBR-TT, ASC-W (cinematography (Roger Deakins)), AA-N (film, adapted screenplay, actor (Freeman), cinematography, sound, editing, original score (Thomas Newman)), NBR #7, GG-N (screenplay, actor-drama (Freeman)), DGA-N, WGA-N (adapted screenplay), SAG-N (actor (Freeman), actor (Robbins)), AMG 4.5, DDDD

The Trial (Le Procès) (1963, 118 min., U) - Orson Welles couples the dream logic of Kafka's absurdist, paranoid nightmare with his own expressionist bent to produce this curious film. He captures Kafka's claustrophobic society and dystopian legal system. It is oppressively bureaucratic, yet disordered to the point that Josef K (Perkins) can't learn the charges against or get satisfaction from his burned-out advocate (Welles). Welles uses tight framing to create K's claustrophobia and wide shots to underscore K's insignificance in a bleak, regimented society. For all its artistry, however, the movie doesn't quite work on any level. It becomes as oppressive and unresolved as the story it tells. Perkins's jittery manner initially makes K a sympathetic character, but Perkins also has a creepy side that distances the audience. K wavers between being naïve, philosophical, and almost effeminate and being defiantly indifferent, brave, and oddly macho. The changes are abrupt and leave us with a sense that our hero may be part of his own decline. When the advocate asks K whether he is a victim of society, K replies, "I am a member of society." Since K is part of the overwhelming system—and wants to succeed in it—we have the sense that he is an accomplice. But the system is so overwhelming that it's hard to imagine any individual standing a chance. The appealing score is from Albinoni's *Adagio*. Its melancholy strains set the right tone, but its beauty transcends anything in K's world.

- Screenplay: Orson Welles from the novel *Der Prozess (The Trial)* by Franz Kafka
- Cast: Anthony Perkins (Josef K), Romy Schneider (Leni), Jeanne Moreau (Miss Burstner), Max Haufler (Uncle Max), Orson Welles (Hastler), Arnaldo Foa (Inspector A)
- Honors: AMG 3, DDD

The Verdict (1982, 122 min., R) - Paul Newman plays an aging, alcoholic lawyer who has a chance to revitalize his career by taking a tort case on behalf of a comatose woman. The part appeals to his vanity as an actor more than his vanity as a movie star. He becomes emotionally involved in the case, rejects a settlement, and heroically proceeds to trial against a Catholic hospital. As with other Sidney Lumet films, *The Verdict* is solid, serious, smart enough, and well acted. But it's a bit implausible, with little doubt about the outcome.

- Screenplay: David Mamet from the novel by Barry Reed

- Cast: Paul Newman (Frank Galvin), James Mason (Ed Concannon), Charlotte Rampling (Laura)
- Honors: NYT-M, WGA #91, NBR-W (director), NBR-TT, AA-N (film, director, adapted screenplay, actor (Newman), supporting actor (Mason)), GG-N (film-drama, director, screenplay, actor-drama (Newman), supporting actor (Mason)), NYFC-N (actor (Newman)), WGA-N (adapted screenplay), AMG 4, DDD

You Only Live Once (1937, 86 min., U) - Ironies abound in Lang's fog-laden thriller about a career criminal and the woman who takes his side. Jo (Sidney) is the upbeat, efficient secretary to a public defender (MacLane) who awaits Eddie's (Fonda) release from prison. Once out, Eddie and Jo marry, but innkeepers and employers are stacked against Eddie. Even Jo's boss and sister are wary. When fired from a trucking job, Eddie slugs the boss and spits out disdain for going straight. An armed robbery follows, leaving six dead. Eddie and Jo go on the lam. Ultimately, the trusting Jo encourages Eddie to turn himself in, which leads to a trial and a fateful climax in which a prison chaplain (Gargan) is slain as news of a pardon belatedly reaches Eddie. A doomed chase to the Mexican border follows, where the cops look like Nazi storm troopers. Lang keeps things tense. There's initial ambiguity about Eddie's role in the robbery, shots of alternative headlines as we await Eddie's fate at trial, metal detectors going off when Jo walks with the priest as she visits Eddie in prison, and a scene where Jo prepares for suicide. Lang's message is obvious. Most of the world is indifferent or hostile to Eddie. Eddie wants an honest life, but crime seems to be his only option. Yet it's hard to be wholly sympathetic with Eddie. He has some decency, but he slugs the trucking boss, has a gun handy, and later kills the innocent priest. These events add complexity and blame to Eddie (even if Fonda's acting doesn't portray it). But for Lang, they seem merely to be the result of Eddie's desperation at societal pressures.

- Screenplay: C. Graham Baker & Gene Towne
- Cast: Sylvia Sidney (Jo Graham), Henry Fonda (Eddie Taylor), Barton MacLane (Stephen Whitney), Jean Dixon (Bonnie Graham), William Gargan (Fr. Dolan)
- Honors: NYT-M, AMG 4, DDDd

Not for the Kids (listed alphabetically)

Here are commendable lawyer films that you might want to watch with adults.

Body Heat (1981, 113 min., R) - Lawrence Kasdan has never matched this, his first offering as a director. It's a stylish gem, hotly filmed in yellows and reds, well acted, with a riveting script. With its steamy atmosphere, flawed private detective, Venetian blinds, smoke, *femme fatale*, and moral detachment, it's among the first of the late 20th Century *film noir* revivals and one of the best. William Hurt plays Ned, a less-than-scrupulous small town lawyer. He meets Matty (Turner in her debut), a rich, married woman at the courthouse. Matty seduces the willing Ned in some highly erotic scenes and enlists him in a plot to slay her husband. Of course, this being a neo-*noir*, there's a double-cross and a couple plot twists. It's self-conscious, derivative, and peters out a little at the

end, but it's very entertaining. Turner's Matty is one of the most confident and controlling characters ever filmed.

- Screenplay: Lawrence Kasdan
- Cast: William Hurt (Ned Racine), Kathleen Turner (Matty Walker), Ted Danson (Peter Lowenstein), Richard Crenna (Edmund Walker), Mickey Rourke (Teddy)
- Honors: NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, WGA-N (original screenplay-drama), GG-N (new star (Turner)), AMG 4.5, DDDd

The Lady from Shanghai (1948, 87 min.) - Director Orson Welles plays Mike, a tough, independent, street smart Irish immigrant, who's had various scrapes with the law. Rita Hayworth plays Elsa, a beautiful, brooding woman who—for what it's worth—was raised in Shanghai. She was somehow tricked into a marriage to a top criminal lawyer named Bannister (Sloane). "Personally, I don't like a girl friend to have a husband," Mike says early on. "If she'll fool him, she can fool me." His Irish accent tends to come and go, sometimes making him hard to understand. But that's only one of many muddled aspects of this complicated little *noir*. As Mike says, "I never make up my mind about anything at all until it's over and done with." The movie itself feels incomplete, but it's still good. The romantic tension between Mike, Elsa, and Bannister, the film's uncertain morality, Bannister's odd partner's (Anders) plot to fake his own death, and various twists keep you watching. Welles shows off with tight close-ups, unusual angles, solid acting, and a concluding cool scene with fun house mirrors (where illusions reveal truth). Hayworth has remarkable presence, underlining her sex appeal. As with most Welles movies, studio interference changed the final product.

- Screenplay: Orson Welles from the novel *If I Die Before I Wake* by Sherwood King
- Cast: Orson Welles (Michael O'Hara), Rita Hayworth (Elsa "Rosalie" Bannister), Everett Sloane (Arthur B.), Glenn Anders (George Grisby), Ted de Corsia (Broome)
- Honors: 1001, AMG 4.5, DDDD

Midnight In the Garden of Good and Evil (1997, 155 min., R) - "In *nouveau riche*, *riche* is the important part." While Clint Eastwood's movie that isn't as good as the sum of its parts, it's pretty entertaining. With Savannah's "bird girl" funeral marker as its poster symbol, the film focuses on a smooth and aloof historic preservationist (Spacey), a man whose work in moneyed circles made him quite rich (he lives in the Mercer house). The story involves a murder and subsequent trial. It's told by a northern reporter with some detachment. While the voodoo woman (Hall) was an unnecessary digression and the pace is southern, this is a decent film. Spacey plays a particularly interesting character and his attorney (Thompson) adds some verve. It's reminiscent of Hitchcock with its blend of the ordinary and the extraordinary.

- Screenplay: John Lee Hancock from the book by John Berendt
- Cast: Kevin Spacey (Jim Williams), John Cusack (John Kelso), Jack Thompson (Sonny Seiler), Alison Eastwood (Mandy), Lady Chablis (herself), Jude Law (Billy)
- Honors: AMG 4, DDDd

Trois Couleurs: Blanc (aka *White* or *Bialy*) (1994, 93 min., R) - A French woman (Delpy) divorces Karol (Zamachowski), a Polish hairdresser, for impotency after

six months of marriage in the “White” installment of Krzysztof Kieslowski’s trilogy based on the colors of the French flag. “Where is the equality?” Karol asks the French judge. Another Pole (Gajos) hires Karol as an accomplice to his own suicide. With moments of dark humor (the man gets smuggled into Poland inside a suitcase that gets stolen), the film is carried by the solid performances of the three lead actors. Each plays a character that is simultaneously appealing, distraught, and calculating. We are again reminded that revenge is a meal best served cold.

- Screenplay: Krzysztof Piesiewicz
- Cast: Zbigniew Zamachowski (Karol), Julie Delpy (Dominique), Janusz Gajos (Mikolai), Juliette Binoche
- Honors: EFA-N (Euro film), BFF-W (director), BFF-N (presented), Polish Film-W (Golden Duck), AMG 3.5, DDDd

Not Recommended (listed alphabetically)

I would avoid some of the usual lawyer film suspects. While perhaps entertaining, I think these are Hollywood contrivances of little probative value.

... *And Justice for All* (1979, 120 min., R) - More bombastic than Norman Jewison's other films, this over-simplified view of justice is hard to take seriously. It rings true only for those with little understanding, but plenty of bias, about the criminal justice system. There are points to make about American justice, but the attempted satire is the victim of overkill. While some people love Al Pacino, he can be an actor with neither control nor nuance. "Preposterous," was Pauline Kael's conclusion.

- Screenplay: Barry Levinson & Valerie Curtin
- Cast: Al Pacino (Arthur Kirkland), Jack Warden (Judge Rayford), John Forsythe (Judge Fleming), Lee Strasberg (Grandpa), Christine Lahti (Gail), Craig T. Nelson (Frank)
- Honors: AA-N (original screenplay, actor (Pacino)), GG-N (actor-drama (Pacino)), AMG 3.5, Dd

Erin Brockovich (2000, 131 min., R) - Steven Soderbergh gives us one of those fictitious true stories about a person who's (sort of) heroic on film but possibly obnoxious in life. Brockovich (Roberts) loses a personal injury lawsuit. Desperate for work, she's hired by the lawyers who beat her. While there, she uncovers *Chinatown*-like corruption involving the water supply. It's well filmed and tries to show the heroine's flaws, but it's still barely above TV movie caliber with stock characters and a requisite tidy ending.

- Screenplay: Susannah Grant
- Cast: Julia Roberts (Erin), Albert Finney (Ed Masry), Aaron Eckhart (George), Marg Helgenberger (Donna Jensen), Cherry Jones (Pamela Duncan)
- Honors: AFI-TT, EFA-N (non-Euro film), NBR-W (director, actress (Roberts)), NSFC-W (director), LAFC-W (director, actress (Roberts)), NYFC-W (director), AA-W (actress (Roberts)), AA-N (film, director, original screenplay, supporting actor (Finney)), GG-W (actress-drama (Roberts)), GG-N (film-drama, director, supporting actor (Finney)), SAG-W (actress (Roberts), supporting actor (Finney)), BFCA-TT, BFCA-W (director, actress (Roberts)), BFCA-N (original screenplay, supporting actor (Finney)), DGA-N, BAFTA-W (actress (Roberts)), BAFTA-N (film, director, original screenplay, editing, supporting actor (Finney)), WGA-N (original screenplay), CFC-N (actress (Roberts), supporting actor (Finney)), AMG 4, Dd

First Monday in October (1981, 98 min., R) - During Jill Clayburgh's 15 minutes of fame, she made some overwrought crap, but Ronald Neame's flick takes the cake. It's a bad movie. The story is predictable and weak; the conceit (a woman on the Supreme Court) has become trite. Clayburgh's conservative-yet-too-young, braless, anti-porn Supreme Court justice never rings true. Matthau plays himself, reasonably well.

- Screenplay: Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee from their play
- Cast: Jill Clayburgh (Justice Ruth Loomis), Walter Matthau (Justice Dan Snow)
- Honors: WGA-N (adapted screenplay-comedy), GG-N (actor-musical or comedy (Matthau), actress-musical or comedy (Clayburgh)), AMG 2.5, D

Intolerable Cruelty (2003, 100 min., PG 13) - A vain, cavalier divorce lawyer (Clooney) engages in a battle of wits (and some romance) with a serial divorcee (Zeta-Jones). While it has zany moments, there's something ultimately conventional about this one, leaving it below the clever standards usually set by Coen Brothers' films (think *Fargo*, *Miller's Crossing*, or *The Big Lebowski*). Instead, it feels like a star vehicle for the more conventional appeal of the charming, smart-aleck Clooney and beautiful, controlling Zeta-Jones. Thornton has fun as a wealthy, somewhat dim, but philosophical Texan who is one of Zeta-Jones's many dupes.

- Screenplay: Joel & Ethan Coen from a short story by Robert Ramsey, John Romano, & Matthew Stone
- Cast: George Clooney (Miles Massey), Catherine Zeta-Jones (Marylin Rexroth), Billy Bob Thornton (Howard Doyle), Geoffrey Rush (Donovan Donnelly), Cedric the Entertainer (Gus Petch), Edward Herrmann (Rex Rexroth), Richard Jenkins (Freddy Bender)
- Honors: AMG 3, DDDd

Kramer vs Kramer (1979, 105 min., PG) - With natural actors playing decent, upper middle class people having marital problems, *K. v. K.* swept awards in '79 (admittedly a weak year except for *Apocalypse Now*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, and a few others). Robert Benton's movie deserves credit as one of the first Hollywood films to attempt an honest look at divorce (a topical trend in '70s America). But with its forced drama and flawed script, it stays with you about as long as a made-for-TV movie. If you saw it back then, you don't remember much about it, do you? Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep give it some depth, but not enough. The movie takes the predictable, popular "the kid comes first" tack and the trial tensions are contrived.

- Screenplay: Robert Benton from the novel by Avery Corman
- Cast: Dustin Hoffman (Ted Kramer), Meryl Streep (Joana Kramer), Jane Alexander, Justin Henry
- Honors: AFI 400, NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, AA-W (film, director, adapted screenplay, actor (Hoffman), supporting actress (Streep)), AA-N (supporting actor (Henry), supporting actress (Alexander)), NYFC-W (film, actor (Hoffman), supporting actress (Streep)), NYFC-N (director, screenplay), LAFC-W (film, director, screenplay, actor (Hoffman)), NBR #10, NBR-W (supporting actress (Streep)), NSFC-W (director-tie, actor (Hoffman), supporting actress (Streep)), GG-W (film-drama, screenplay, actor-drama (Hoffman), supporting actress (Alexander), supporting actress (Streep)), GG-N (director, supporting actor (Henry)), DGA-W, WGA-W (adapted drama screenplay), AMG 4, DDD

Liar Liar (1997, 87 min., PG-13) - Jim Carrey plays an attorney who's a pathological liar trying to salvage his marriage by being honest in this comedy directed by Tom Shadyac. It has some funny moments in court, but it too slight to use as a teaching tool.

- Screenplay: Paul Guay & Stephen Mazur
- Cast: Jim Carrey (Fletcher Reede), Maura Tierney (Audrey Reede), Jennifer Tilly (Samantha Cole), Swozie Kurtz (Dana)
- Honors: GG-N (actor-comedy or musical (Carrey)), AMG 3, DDD

Philadelphia (1993, 125 min., PG-13) - Perhaps Jonathan Demme was right in thinking that he needed to cast famous actors to get Americans to watch a movie about AIDS. Perhaps he needed to cast America's favorite star (Hanks) as the gay man at the center of the drama. Maybe Hollywood had to make Hanks's character so universally likeable, competent, and sympathetic in the face of a stodgy law firm that fired him because of his disease. And perhaps we needed a handsome, masculine, action movie figure (Washington) to play the attorney who grudgingly takes Hanks's case and eventually comes to respect his humanity. But there's something over-scripted about the whole thing. There's little doubt that Hanks gives a solid performance, albeit a bit saintly (we even see him give coins to a beggar). Seeing him deteriorate throughout the trial is very moving; we care for this guy. Still, there's a trite sensibility about the trial. We know exactly where every scene is going. Washington engages in some very unlikely behavior in the courtroom, as do some of the witnesses, to needlessly heighten the drama. There's a shirt-removal scene that's as effective as it is improbable. (Mary Steenburgen is remarkably controlled and effective as lead counsel for the bad guys, but her real-world character wouldn't have blundered into allowing that bare-chested situation.) Demme mixes some telling long shots in the court- and board rooms (often with askew or overhead camera angles) with his characteristic symmetrical close-ups. But otherwise directs without flare. The exception is a dramatic, red-lit, crescendo in which the camera circles

above Hanks as he waltzes with his fluid bag, lost in a Maria Callas aria. It's a stunt scene, but a powerful one.

- Screenplay: Ron Nyswaner
- Cast: Tom Hanks (Andrew Beckett), Denzel Washington (Joe Miller), Mary Steenburgen (Belinda Conine), Antonio Banderas (Miguel), Jason Robards (Charles Wheeler), Joanne Woodward (Sarah Beckett)
- Honors: AFI 400, NBR #7, 1001, AA-W (actor (Hanks), original song ("The Streets of Philadelphia" by Bruce Springsteen)), AA-N (song ("Philadelphia" by Neil Young), makeup), GG-W (actor (Hanks), original song ("The Streets of Philadelphia")), GG-N (screenplay), BFF-W (actor (Hanks)), BFF-N (presented), DGA-N, WGA-N (original screenplay (Ron Nyswaner)), AMG 3.5, DDDd

Presumed Innocent (1990, 127 min., R) - Alan J. Pakula gives us a superficial, true facts thriller about an aggressive prosecutor (Ford) whose put on trial for the murder of a woman with whom he had an affair. It has a nice twist at the end.

- Screenplay: Alan J. Pakula & Frank Pierson from the novel by Scott Turow
- Cast: Harrison Ford (Rusty Sabich), Brian Dennehy (Raymond Horgan), Raul Julia (Sandy Stern), Bonnie Bedelia (Barbara Sabich), Greta Scacchi (Carolyn Polhemus)
- Honors: AMG 3.5, DDD

Traffic (2000, 147 min., R) - An Ohio judge (Douglas) leads the government's "War on Drugs" while his daughter's (Christensen) drug habit leads her to seamy hotels and prostitution. The wife (Zeta-Jones) of a drug kingpin tries not to, but becomes one herself. A Mexican cop (del Toro) enforces drug laws against overwhelming odds. That's right; Steven Soderbergh's melodrama is fraught with all the drug abuse clichés imaginable. Golly gee, it took these Hollywood sophisticates show us a link between hard-core drug abuse and having a nightly scotch or recommending two glasses of wine to friends. Maybe marijuana causes drug addiction. Or maybe, just maybe, this movie isn't very deep or meaningful, despite some flamboyant touches. Zeta-Jones's evolution into a drug kingpin is especially unrealistic. On the plus side, the filming has style, particularly the orange Mexican scenes that make you feel the sand and heat. Part of it was filmed in Columbus and Cincinnati.

- Screenplay: Stephen Gaghan
- Cast: Michael Douglas (Justice Wakefield), Don Cheadle (Montel Gordon), Benicio del Toro (Javier Rodriguez), Luis Guzman (Ray Castro), Dennis Quaid (Arnie Metzger), Catherine Zeta-Jones (Helena Ayala), Steven Bauer (Carlos Ayala), Amy Irving (Barbara Wakefield), Erika Christensen (Caroline Wakefield), Albert Finney (Chief of Staff)
- Honors: AFI-TT, NYT-M, NYT-TT, 1001, NYFC-W (film, director, supporting actor (del Toro)), NSFC-W (director, supporting actor (del Toro)), NBR-TT, NBR-W (director), AA-W (director, adapted screenplay, supporting actor (del Toro), editing), AA-N (film), BFCA-TT, BFCA-W (director, original screenplay), BFCA-N (cinematography (Stephen "Peter Andrews" Soderbergh) & supporting actor (del Toro)), LAFC-W (director), LAFC-N (supporting actor), TFCA-W (director), GG-W (screenplay, supporting actor (del Toro)), GG-N (film-drama, director, supporting actress (Zeta-Jones)), BAFTA-W (supporting actor (del Toro)), BAFTA-N (director), BFF-W (actor (del Toro)), BFF-N (presented), BFF-N (director, editing), DGA-N, WGA-N (adapted screenplay), FAC-N (foreign film), CFC-W (director, supporting actor (del Toro)), CFC-N (film, screenplay, cinematography, supporting actress)), SAG-W (cast, actor (Del Toro)), AMG 4.5, DDD

Still Other Law-Related Movies

There has been a spate of law-related movies in recent years, including:

- *The Accused* (1988) - Directed by Jonathan Kaplan. Fairly predictable, but capably-acted drama about a rape victim (Jody Foster) who feels she, too, is on trial. AMG 4

- *The Castle* (1997) - Directed by Rob Sitch. Courtroom comedy about seizing another person's land. AMG 2
- *The Chamber* (1996) - Directed by James Foley. A film version of a John Grisham novel with the unlikely premise that a lawyer (Chris O'Donnell) must defend his bigoted grandfather (Gene Hackman) who is charged with a hate-crime murder. AMG 2
- *A Civil Action* (1998) - Directed by Steve Zaillian. David and Goliath story of a small law firm taking (and John Travolta) on a major corporation (and Robert Duvall) over carcinogenic chemicals in the water supply. AMG 2.5
- *Class Action* (1991) - Directed by Michael Apted. In a scenario that only happens in the movies, father (Gene Hackman) and daughter (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) lawyers face off in an exploding car case. AMG 3
- *A Cry in the Dark* (1988) - Directed by Fred Schepisi. This is the film version of "the dingo ate my baby" defense in Australia, starring Merle Streep. AMG 4
- *Devil's Advocate* (1997) - Directed by Taylor Hackford. A yarn about recruiting young lawyers (including Keanu Reeves) into a large firm (Al Pacino). AMG 2.5
- *A Few Good Men* (1992) - Directed by Rob Reiner. A courtroom flick in which a young military lawyer (Tom Cruise) has his hands full with a witness (Jack Nicholson) who may have ordered two Marines to commit murder. AMG 3.5
- *The Hurricane* (1999) - Directed by Norman Jewison. Jewison is sympathetic to boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter's (Denzel Washington) claim that he was wrongfully incarcerated for murder. AMG 3
- *I Am Sam* (2001) - Directed by Jessie Nelson. A child custody case involving a mentally limited father (Sean Penn) who may lose his daughter. AMG 2
- *Legal Eagles* (1986) - Directed by Ivan Reitman. An attorney (Robert Redford) romances an accused art thief (Daryl Hannah). AMG 2.5
- *Let Him Have It* (1991) - Directed by Peter Medak. Two young men are convicted of killing a police officer. The savvy one escapes execution because he is a minor. His adult accomplice faces the death penalty despite his limited mental skills. AMG 4
- *Murder in the First* (1995) - Directed by Marc Rocco, with Christian Slater, Kevan Bacon, and Gary Oldman. Covers a law suit brought after an Alcatraz inmate goes crazy in solitary confinement.
- *Primal Fear* (1996) - Directed by Gregory Hoblit. An attorney (Richard Gere) defends a choir boy (Edward Norton) accused of killing a priest. AMG 3.5
- *Rainmaker* (1997) - Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. An ambulance chaser meets a battered teen. AMG 2.5
- *Rules of Engagement* (2000) - Directed by William Friedkin. A "rules of engagement" court martial case starring Tommy Lee Jones as the lawyer and Samuel L. Jackson as the accused. AMG 2.5
- *Snow Falling on Cedars* (2000) - Directed by Scott Hicks. A trial deals with the legacy of Japanese internment during WW II. AMG 2.5
- *A Time to Kill* (1996) - Directed by Joel Schumacher. In another Grisham tale, a young attorney (Matthew McConaughey) defends a black man (Samuel L. Jackson) accused of killing two whites after they rape his daughter. Kevin Spacey is the prosecutor. AMG 2
- *Trial and Error* (1997) - Directed by Jonathan Lynn. Lynn's "sequel" to *My Cousin Vinny* doesn't work as well in this comedy starring Michael Richards as attorney Jeff Daniels's non-lawyer buddy who tries to bluff his way through a case. AMG 2

Key to Abbreviations

-N = Nominated; -W = Won

AA	Academy Awards (“Oscars”) (1927 to 2006)
AFI #	Rank in American Film Institute’s Top 100 American Movies (1898-1998)
AFI 400	American Film Institute’s Top 400 American Films (1898-1998) [excluding those in AFI # and AFI-C]
AFI-C	American Film Institute’s Top 100 American Comedies (1888 to 1998)
AFI-TT	American Film Institute’s annual top 10 films (1999 to 2006)
AMG	All Movie Guide (website rates movies from 1 to 5 stars)
BAFTA	British Academy Awards (1947 to 2006)
BFAA	Broadcast Film Critics Association (1995 to 2006)
BFF	Berlin Film Festival (1956-2006)
CFC	Chicago Film Critics’ Awards (1988 to 2006)
CFE	Cannes Film Festival (1949, 1951-67, 1969-2006)
D	My ratings (from worst (d) to best (DDDDD). d = ½ D)
DGA	Screen Directors Guild of America annual best director award (1948-2005)
EFA	European Film Academy (1988 to 2006)
FAC	French Academy of Cinema (<i>Academie Française</i>)
F:CC 150	Film: Critics’ Choice (150 greatest movies chosen by various critics in 2001)
GG	Golden Globe annual awards of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (1943-2006)
ISA	Independent Spirit Awards (1985 to 2005)
LAFC	Los Angeles Film Critics Association annual awards (1975 to 2006)
NBR	National Board of Review annual film awards (1929-30 to 2006)
NBR-TT	National Board of Review Annual Top Ten films (1929-30 to 2006)
NFR	Films selected for preservation in original form by the National Film Registry at the U.S. Library of Congress (1989-2006)
NSFC	National Society of Film Critics annual awards (1966 to 2006)
NYFC	New York Film Critics’ Circle annual film awards (1935 to 2006, except 1962)
NYT-M	New York Times’s <i>Best 1000 Movies Ever Made</i> (through 2002)
NYT-TT	New York Times’s Annual top 10 Movies (1931 to 2004)
1001	<i>1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die</i> (2005), edited by Stephen Jay Schneider
SAG	Screen Actors Guild annual acting awards (1994 to 2006)
S&S-C	Sight & Sound Magazine’s Critics’ Survey of Best Films Ever (1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992, & 2002)
S&S-D	Sight & Sound Magazine’s Directors’ Survey of Best Films Ever (1952, 1992, & 2002)
TFCA	Toronto Film Critics Association (1996 to 2006)
VFF	Venice Film Festival (top movie prize is the Golden Lion) (1932, 1934-42, 1946-68, & 1980-2006)
WGA	Screen Writers’ Guild of America (1948 to 2006)

Sources

The reviews are personal observations, but I owe a great debt to various sources, particularly in providing background on directors, details about the movies (length, cast, music, etc.), and other information. Here are my favorites:

- The movies themselves; Columbus Metropolitan Library’s collection; Turner Classic Movies (TCM) Network, which shows movies uncut and uninterrupted.
- On directors and movies: *All Movie Guide* website; *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* by David Thompson (2004); *New Yorker* magazine reviews; *New York Times Guide to the Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made* (2002); *The St. James Film Directors Encyclopedia*, edited by Andrew Sarris (1998); *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die* (2005), edited by Steven Jay Schneider; *Quinlan’s Film Directors* (1999) by David Quinlan; *Eyewitness Companions: Film* (2006) by Ronald Bergan.