

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
2025-26

Suggested pre-reading for prospective undergraduate law (M101) students.

There is no obligation to read, listen to, or watch anything in particular before you start your degree. However, if you do have a bit of time and the enthusiasm then it will certainly be worth getting your mind tuned to law. Our suggestions here are for sources that will help you to do that. Thinking about interesting questions in law is more valuable, at this stage, than starting to read textbooks or in any other way trying to anticipate the precise topics of your first year studies. This is a long list and there is no expectation that you would consult everything on it. We share this list only to provide you with some ideas.

Other than these suggestions, it will be very valuable if you just start thinking more about what is happening around you and how it relates to the law. So, for example, keep up with the news, read a good newspaper (and any legal section in particular) and listen to some law related podcasts.

Some Law Reading

- Imogen Moore and Craig Newbury Jones, *The Successful Law Student: An Insider's guide to studying law* (2018)
- ATH Smith, *Glanville Williams: Learning the Law* (17th edn, 2020)
- Allan Hutchinson, *Is Eating People Wrong? Great Legal cases and how they shaped the world by Allan Hutchinson* (2011)
- Catherine Barnard, Janet O'Sullivan & Graham Virgo, *What about Law: Studying Law at University* (2011)
- Clare Dyer and Marcel Berlins, *The Law Machine* (2000)
- Helena Kennedy, *Eve was Framed* (1993)
- The Secret Barrister, *The Secret Barrister* (2018)
- Alexandra Wilson, *In Black and White: A Young Barrister's Story of Race and Class in a Broken Justice System* (2020)
- Ian McEwan, *The Children Act* (2014)
- Gitta Sereny, *Cries Unheard, Why the Children Kill – the story of Mary Bell* (1998)
- Isabel Hardman, *Why We Get the Wrong Politicians* (2019), not strictly legal but, as you will learn, there is a strong relationship between law and politics. A good read for anyone who wants to understand the landscape of contemporary politics.

And some literature...

At Newcastle Law Library, we have a Law and Literature Section. The students and staff are encouraged to dip into this world of literature, to reflect, and perhaps to draw connections with the legal world (though that last part isn't compulsory). Join our conversations on Twitter #LawLit @nclliblaw. Some of the books in our collection are available online on [Project Gutenberg](#).

- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
- Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*
- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*
- Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*

- Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*
- Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*
- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*
- Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*
- Franz Kafka, *The Trial*
- Jane Austen, *Persuasion*

Websites and blogs

- [Law Careers](#)

A website published in association with the Law Society and the Bar Council, and sponsored by BPP Law School. It contains news, advice, immediate vacancies, an events diary, and directories of law firms, chambers and undergraduate and postgraduate law course providers.

- [Legal Cheek](#)

This is a very informal source of legal news, and gives information on how the legal sector is responding to the big issues of the day. They are also very active on social media, so take a look at their instagram, facebook or twitter pages for regular updates

- [Constitutional Law Matters](#)

This project is an initiative of the Centre for Public Law at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Law. It aims to evaluate whether the UK constitution is (still) fit for purpose; in doing so, it seeks to stimulate public debate and aid public understanding of constitutional matters. A fantastic and reliable introduction to a number of important constitutional law issues that are relevant right now (so brilliant for tuning your mind into current legal issues).

- [Public Law for Everyone](#)

Public Law is another way of saying 'Constitutional Law' - and there are a lot of constitutional issues going on at the moment Professor Mark Elliott's blog tries to explain these big topics.

- [North East Law Review](#)

Blog posts on topical legal issues written by Newcastle Law Students.

- [Lawyer Watch](#)

Research and Commentary on the Legal Profession written by Professor Richard Moorhead (Exeter Law School).

Courses

[Inside the UK Supreme Court: Its Role, Its Work, and Cases that Affect Us All](#) If you are desperate to 'learn' then this is a great free course (select the 'free, limited access' option) which will lead you on exploration of the role of the UK Supreme Court (The UK's top court). You will hear from its Justices and staff, and learn about some of the Court's landmark rulings. A fantastic subject to familiarise yourself ahead of your arrival, since you will meet and learn quite a bit about the UK Supreme Court.

Podcasts

- [North East Law Review](#)

Our very own students have a fantastic podcast interviewing academic members of staff both at Newcastle and elsewhere. Have a listen and it will help you to get to know some of our staff members and their areas of work

- [Law in Action](#)

Joshua Rozenberg presents Radio 4's long-running legal magazine programme, featuring reports and discussion on matters relating to law.

- [Shreds: Muder in the Dock](#)

A young woman is murdered in a frenzied knife attack. Outside, a man is crying and covered in blood. What happens next almost defies belief... this is a great podcast for getting us thinking through some of the injustice in the legal system.

- [Just Theory](#)

A podcast by our own Dr Emilia Mickiewicz (Newcastle University Law School) & Aleksandra Wawrzyszczuk (Graduate Division, NYU Law School, LLM Candidate '21). Championing female-led scholarship in analytic philosophy and legal theory. Great chats, including with Baroness Hale of Richmond, former President of the UK Supreme Court.

- [Law Pod UK](#)

Law Pod UK covers developments across all aspects of civil and public law in the United Kingdom. It is brought to you by the barristers at 1 Crown Office Row, and is presented by Rosalind English and Emma-Louise Fenelon.

- [The Media Law Podcast](#)

The Media Law Podcast features news from the world of Media Law and debate on topical issues. It's intended to be a useful resource for students of Law, Journalism, and Media & Communications, and also for academics and practitioners in those fields.

- [Round my Kitchen Table](#)

Every week Guardian law columnist Alex Aldridge, Bircham Dyson Bell lawyer Kevin Poulter and a guest meet round Alex's kitchen table to discuss the week's big legal events over a bottle of wine.

- [Matrix Chambers](#)

A podcast featuring many of the barristers at Matrix Chambers in London and considering topics including human rights, social justice and international law.

Lectures or short videos

- [Life, Law, Bim](#)

A YouTube Channel by Nia Marshall, a former Newcastle Law School student (graduated 2020). The channel features individuals' journeys to the Bar demonstrating the diversity of backgrounds that are currently practising at the Bar of England and Wales. It also offers insight on scholarships and other award opportunities. Given that the producer and host is Barbadian, some videos reveal her experience overcoming obstacles on her way to the Bar as a Caribbean or West Indian woman in the United Kingdom. Occasionally, the Channel features other students' experiences pursuing further studies in other disciplines; and a focus on the international student experience. Quite a few videos specifically reference studying at Newcastle Law School.

- [Gresham Lectures](#)

A series of lectures on a variety of different legal subjects.

<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch/?subject=law>

- [First Hundred Years series](#)

Videos charting the journey of women in law over the last 100 years. See, for example, [Lady Hale's interview](#) (recently retired President of the UK Supreme Court and someone you will get to know very well during your studies). There are loads of great stories to browse.

- [What is the Supreme Court?](#)

Why was the UK Supreme Court established in 2009? And what issues does it hear about? This introductory film presented by Stacey Dooley is primarily aimed at GCSE/Standard Grade students and explores the role and the workings of the Supreme Court, but it will be a

useful little recap for you before you get going with thinking about this Court in more detail during your first year.

- [UK Supreme Court: The Highest Court in the Land Documentary](#)

A fantastic BBC documentary, which gives you a bit more to think about than the shorter Stacey Dooley film mentioned above. Four of the Justices of the Supreme Court talk frankly and openly about the nature of justice and how they make their decisions. The film offers a revealing glimpse of the human characters behind the judgments and explores why the Supreme Court and its members are fundamental to our democracy. A valuable watch ahead of your first semester studies in Constitutional Law.

Law in Films and TV

Constitutional Law, rule of law, legal theory

- **Judgment at Nuremberg (1961):** Stanley Kramer directed this portrayal of the Nazi war crimes trials set in 1948. It focuses, in particular, on charges brought against four German judges who are accused of allowing their courts to become accomplices to Nazi atrocities.
- **Official Secrets (2019):** The true story of a British whistleblower who leaked information to the press about an illegal NSA spy operation designed to push the UN Security Council into sanctioning the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Covers some constitutional law themes (which you will study in your first semester).
- **Small Axe, 'Mangrove' (2020):** The first of five episodes in a TV film series. True Story. In the 1970s, 150 black protestors marched peacefully on the police station in Notting Hill to demonstrate against racial harassment by the police. The trial that followed was the first judicial acknowledgment of behavior motivated by racial hatred within the Metropolitan Police.

Family law

- **Kramer vs Kramer (1979):** Starring Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep, the film focuses on the wider implications of divorce and places particular emphasis on just how stressful it can be for a child who is caught up in the middle. It shows how even the bitterest of breakups can ultimately be resolved in a way which puts the child first. This is a must watch for anyone interested in family law.
- **A Separation (2011):** Simin desperately wants to leave Iran with Nader, her husband of 14 years, and their daughter, Termeh. Nader, however, is concerned for his elderly father, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Simin files for divorce, but the family court judges the couple's problems insufficient to warrant divorce and rejects Simin's application.
- **The Children Act (2018):** Based on the book by Ian McKewan, this story centres on the question of whether a 17-year-old boy, a Jehovah's Witness, should be forced by court order to have a blood transfusion. Emma Thompson plays the High Court judge with this incredibly difficult decision. A realistic portrayal of the family life of the judge and of the problems of balancing life, the law and relationships at the modern Bar.
- **My Name is Leon (2022):** TV series about Leon, a mixed-race boy, and Jake, his white baby brother, are separated after their mother has a breakdown. Leon is determined to find him and gets unexpected support along the way. Deals with institutional racism.

Discrimination

- **Philadelphia (1993):** Tom Hanks won an Oscar as an Ivy-educated gay attorney who claims his big-time law firm fired him after discovering he contracted AIDS. Denzel Washington is the personal injury lawyer who takes the case when everyone else turns Hanks' character down, and who comes to terms with his own homophobia.
- **Made in Dagenham (2010):** A dramatization of the 1968 strike at the Ford Dagenham car plant, where female workers walked out in protests against sexual discrimination
- **Pride (2014):** UK gay activists work to help miners during their lengthy strike of the National Union of Mineworkers in the summer of 1984.
- **On the Basis of Sex (2018):** This biographical law film is based on the life of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an icon of the American legal system. Becoming a lawyer at a time when women were severely discriminated against on the basis of gender, and when more than 100 laws discriminated against women, she fought tirelessly for women's rights and positioned herself in the upper echelons of the legal sphere.

Free Speech

- **The people vs Larry Flynt (1996):** The story of a controversial pornographer publisher and how he became a defender of free speech.

Civil Law

- **Rainmaker (1997):** A struggling lawyer takes on a corrupt insurance company which refuses to pay out a legitimate claim for a dying young man.
- **A Civil Action (1998):** On its surface, this is a David vs. Goliath: Small-firm Boston plaintiffs lawyers up against two conglomerates whose tannery, they've decided, is responsible for the leukemia-related deaths of eight children. At its core, however, this is a grown-up thriller about the perilous practical consequences of demanding moral outcomes from a legal action better suited to risk-and-reward.
- **Erin Brockovich (2000):** Based on a true story. A 'cause lawyering' film. A clerk in a small law office pursues an action against a huge corporation, suspected of widespread land pollution.
- **Dark Waters (2019):** A defence lawyer goes up against a corporation to stop it from polluting a water source and endangering the lives of the people.

Law and religion

- **Inherit the Wind (1960):** Based on the colloquially named Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, *Inherit the Wind* charts Tennessee's decision to ban the teaching of evolution in schools in favour of creationism. With much of the film taken directly from the trial transcripts, the arguments from the counsel on behalf of Tennessee shows just how powerful the influence of religion can be. The film shows the age-old battle between science and religion and how in extreme cases, the courts have had to mediate this.

Crime, Criminal Procedure and Evidence

- **12 Angry Men (1957):** Classic legal drama starring Henry Fonda about a single juror attempting to prevent a miscarriage of justice by forcing his colleagues to reconsider the evidence. The film is a good reminder that jurors are human and come into the courtroom with their own experiences that will impact the way they view the case.
- **The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020):** tells the story of a group of Vietnam War protesters who are put on trial and accused of inciting a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

- **To Kill a Mockingbird (1962):** This three-time-Oscar-winner is based on the novel by Harper Lee and stars Gregory Peck as the lead character Atticus Finch. Based in the 1930's Alabama during the great depression, the film deals with the issues of racism and segregation, all too prevalent in 1930's USA. Finch is appointed as defence attorney for Tom Robinson, a young black man accused of raping a white woman. This is a great law film to watch for those interested in human rights and criminal law.
- **My Cousin Vinny (1992):** Vincent "Vinny" Gambini is a brash Brooklyn lawyer who only recently managed to pass the bar exam on his sixth try. He's representing his cousin and a friend—two California-bound college students who are arrested for capital murder after a short stop at a convenience store in rural Alabama. The movie packs in cinema's briefest opening argument ("Everything that guy just said is bullshit.").
- **In the Name of the Father (1993):** Pete Postlethwaite and Daniel Day-Lewis play Giuseppe and Gerry Conlon, a real-life father and son falsely accused of participating in two separate IRA bombing sprees outside London. The film chronicles their struggle to convince British courts of their innocence.
- **The People v's O.J. Simpson (2016):** This dramatization traces the twists and turns of O.J. Simpson's murder trial.
- **Stephen: The Murder that Changed the Nation (2018 (BBC documentary):** Documentary series examining the murder of Stephen Lawrence
- **A Confession (2019):** Based on the true story of DS Stephen Fulcher and his hunt for missing 22-year-old Sian O'Callaghan, and how it led to the arrest of Christopher Halliwell. This was the beginning of the capture of a prolific serial killer and the detectives own downfall.
- **Making a Murderer Season 1 (2015):** The show tells the story of Steven Avery, a man who served 18 years in prison for the wrongful conviction of sexual assault and attempted murder of Penny Beerntsen. He was later charged in 2005, and convicted in 2007, for the murder of Teresa Halbach.
- **Vera Drake (2004):** Abortionist Vera Drake finds her beliefs and practices clash with the mores of 1950s Britain.
- **Fruitvale Station (2013):** This film is based on the events leading to the death of Oscar Grant, a young man who was killed in 2009 by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle at the Fruitvale district station of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system in Oakland.
- **Prima Facie:** Jodie Comer's play. Comer plays Tessa, a young, brilliant barrister who has worked her way up from working class origins to be at the top of her game; defending; cross examining and winning. An unexpected event forces her to confront the lines where the patriarchal power of the law, burden of proof and morals diverge in this "unforgettable moment of theatre".