

FAMOUS AMERICAN TRIALS

Coordinator: Barry Cooper

Each week we consider a famous trial to explore why the trial grabbed the public's attention and became memorable. We look at the facts of the case, the evidence presented, arguments of counsel, the ultimate verdict and the historical context in which the case was decided. We consider the trials of Leo Frank, Leopold and Loeb, John Scopes, the Scottsboro Boys, the Rosenbergs, Sam Sheppard, the Chicago 7, Lt. William Calley (My Lai Court Martial), Bernhard Goetz, Rodney King assault, O.J. Simpson and George Zimmerman (Trayvon Martin). Individual cases raise the issues of Social Class, Religion, Politics, War, Race and Celebrity Status.

Readings and other Required Materials:

The readings for this study group will be on a website using materials from "Famous Trials" by Douglas O. Linder, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law. The weekly selections will usually also include a summary of the trial. Other material might include excerpts from the trial transcript of testimony of witnesses and/or opening and closing statements of the attorneys, contemporaneous reports about the trial, excerpts from scholarly journals and selected YouTube videos.

Barry, a retired intellectual property attorney, has coordinated The War in Vietnam, Landmark Supreme Court Decisions and Freedom of Religion.

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WEEK 1: Introduction to the Study Group, Social " Class" in the Courtroom:

The Trial of Leopold and Loeb

WEEK 2: Religion in the Courtroom:

The Trial and Lynching of Leo Frank

WEEK 3: Religion in the Courtroom:

The Scopes “Monkey” Trial

- WEEK 4: Politics in the Courtroom (Communism):
The Rosenberg Espionage Trial
- WEEK 5: Politics in the Courtroom (Protest)
The “Chicago 7 Conspiracy” Trial
- WEEK 6: War in the Courtroom (Vietnam):
The My Lai Court Martial (Lt. William Calley)
- WEEK 7: Race in the Courtroom:
Trials of the “Scottsboro Boys”
- WEEK 8: Race in the Courtroom:
The Rodney King Assault Trial
- WEEK 9: Race in the Courtroom:
The Trial of Bernhard Goetz
- WEEK 10: Race in the Courtroom:
The Trial of George Zimmerman (Trayvon Martin)
- WEEK 11: Celebrities in the Courtroom:
The Trials of Sam Sheppard
- WEEK 12: Celebrities in the Courtroom:
The Trial of O.J. Simpson