

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
Department of History
HIUS153
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AMERICAN POLITICAL TRIALS

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HSS 6073
Office hours: MW 11-12

The Trials of America: From Zenger to Clinton

This lecture-discussion course will examine famous American political, criminal and civil trials from the colonial period of American history through the impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton in 1999. The seminar will use documents and materials developed by Professor Douglas O. Linder at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law and available at his website:<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/ftrials.htm> The instructor will provide additional article assignments for photoduplication (xeroxing) through email to the students.

Among the trials to be considered are those of John Peter Zenger for seditious libel in New York; the trial of British soldiers for the Boston Massacre; the trial of the African-American slaves onboard the ship *Amistad*; the trial of Susan B. Anthony; the Triangle Shirtwaist trial in New York City; the John Scopes “money trial” of 1925; the trial of the Scottsboro defendants in Alabama (1931-37); the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for “atomic espionage;” and the impeachment trial of President Clinton.

Requirements for the course include regular attendance at seminar meetings, a willingness to participate in class discussions, and a 10-15 page paper on one of the trials examined in the course.

No special background or expertise in American history or American law is required to succeed in this course. All are welcome. The course provides an excellent opportunity to learn about American law and how famous trials have influenced American culture.

Lecture/Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments

Session I: **Introduction to the Course and Materials**

Session II **The Trial of John Peter Zenger for Seditious Libel (1735)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Larry Eldridge, “Before Zenger: Truth and Seditious Speech in Colonial America; Leonard Levy, “Did the Zenger Case Really Matter?”

Session III: **Boston Massacre Trials (1770)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Pauline Maier, “Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in 18th Century America; John Phillip Reid, “A Lawyer Acquitted: John Adams and the Boston Massacre Trials”

Session IV: **Amistad Trials (1839-40)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

William Wiecek, “Slavery and Abolition before the United State Supreme Court;” Joseph Adjaye, “Amistad and the Lessons of History;” Sally Hadden, “How Accurate Is the Film?” Howard Jones, “Cinque of the Amistad;” Paul Finkelman, “On Cinque and the Historians”

Session V: **Susan B. Anthony Trial (1873)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Ellen DuBois, “Outgrowing the Compact of the Fathers: Equal Rights, Women’s Suffrage and the Constitution;” Robert Riegel, “The Split of Feminist Movement in 1869;” Holly McCammon, “Winning the Vote in the West”

Session VI: **The Triangle Fire (1911)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Arthur McEvoy, “The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911”

Session VII: **The Scopes “Monkey Trial” (1925)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Harry Kalvin, “A Commemorative Case: Note on Scopes v. State;”
Edward Larson, “The Scopes Trial and the Evolving Concept of Freedom”

Session VIII: **The Scottsboro Trials (1931-1937)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Hugh Murray, Jr., “Changing America and the Changing Image of
Scottsboro;” Michael Klarman, “The Racial Origins of Modern Criminal Procedure”

Session IX: **The Rosenbergs (1951)**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Michael Parrish, “Cold War Justice: The Supreme Court and the
Rosenbergs;” Cushing Strout, “Reconsidering the Rosenbergs: History, Novel, Film”

Session X: **The Impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton**

Linder: Famous Trials Website

Karen Popp, “The Impeachment of President Clinton;” L. H. LaRue, “The
Story About Clinton’s Impeachment”

Final Course Papers Due in Class