

Oral presentation

Mass culture of coercive psychiatric confinement

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In *Movies on Trial* [1], I examine ways in which popular legal culture (especially television, fiction, and film) helps shape American attitudes toward different aspects of legal process and legal system. Among the topics I consider are criminal law, tort law, international law, constitutional law, and comparative law. I am now writing a second book on this subject, *Movies on Appeal*, and I will be examining a second tier of legal topics or subjects (contract law, property law, the law of war, labor law) and how they are treated in mass culture. Specifically, I will be adding a chapter on law and psychiatry, a course which I have taught to law students for about 20 years. I wish to examine the ways in which popular legal culture helps to shape images (and perceptions) of coercive psychiatric confinement in the United States. Perhaps no other issue in the field of law and psychiatry has captured public attention or the focus of mass culture like involuntary civil commitment. I not only want to compare and contrast images of such confinement in television, fiction, and film, but I want to show concretely what connections exist between popular images and popular perception, and between the latter and professional practice in this field.

References

1. Chase A: *Movies on Trial* New York: New Press; 2002.