

Introduction to Legal Studies

Spring 2007

Discussion Questions for Tuesday, February 13th **Civil (Dis)Obedience, Justice, and Society**

For Tuesday's class we will look at the ways in which people value obedience to law or advocate disobedience to law. The first reading is a classic essay by Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," written in 1963 while the minister was in jail for disobeying a court order banning protests in the City of Birmingham, Alabama. The article by Tweed, Segal, and Packer was written in response to King's essay. The authors were prominent lawyers in the era who worked for an organization aptly named the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Please complete the readings and then write out answers to the following questions using the readings to support your points.

1. What are the characteristics of civil disobedience according to King? When does he believe it is justified? What problems might arise if everyone followed his vision?
2. What do Tweed, Segal, and Packer see as the detrimental effects of civil disobedience? Under what circumstances do they see disobedience as justified? What problems might arise if everyone followed their vision?
3. Does either obedience to law or civil disobedience result in greater justice?
4. Under what circumstances and in what situations do you believe civil disobedience is justified? Why do you think that? What support do you get in your position from the authors of today's readings?