

# Introduction to Legal Studies

Spring 2007

## Reading and Discussion Questions for Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>

Ewick and Silbey, *The Common Place of Law* (chapters one & two)

The readings for Tuesday (and for three classes after that) increase in amount and complexity as we read a book that helps us understand the different ways in which people perceive the law. Ewick and Silbey's *Common Place of Law* takes the results of hundreds of interviews with a wide cross section of Americans (New Jerseyites, to be precise) and analyzes those interviews to come to conclusions about how people think about law in everyday life – what they call *legality*. As you read, I encourage you to think about how *you* think about the law. Do the examples and illustrations given by the authors comport with the way you see and make sense of things? Do you understand that not everyone perceives legality in the same way?<sup>1</sup>

1. What do Silbey and Ewick mean when they use the term “legality”? Think of an example of what they might describe as legality but that wouldn't constitute *law* in the commonly understood sense. How are legality and law different?
2. How is studying “law (or legality) in everyday life” different from studying “law?”
3. How did Ewick and Silbey come to the conclusions they reach? What is their method?

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The reading is at times theoretical. I urge you to read with a dictionary in order to help clarify some of the terms they use. Again, if you don't have a dictionary, use [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com). Many of the ideas and concepts should be familiar to you after our first few class sessions. At the same time, don't get so caught up in the minutiae that you can't move through the pages. I find that in reading this, there are terms and ideas that are confusing when first introduced that quickly clarify as the authors define and illustrate them.