

Introduction to Legal Studies

Spring 2007

Discussion Questions for Thursday, April 5th

Law in Other Comparative Perspective

The film called "Little Injustices" shows the legal anthropologist, Laura Nader, in a remote Zapotec Indian village in Mexico. She compares problem-solving in the village with problem-solving in American society. In this small-scale Mexican society, where most interactions were face-to-face, and anger and conflicts needed constantly to be resolved, Nader found that emphasis was on balanced solutions rather than on blaming a guilty party. In contrast, in the United States, the legal system works very differently.

1. The law operates differently in the remote Mexican village than it does in the United States. How does the law operate in each context?
2. Why does the law operate differently in each context? Comment on the social and economic organization and function of community relations in each context.
3. Think about the case of the damaged chilies (*Before the Law* p. 89). What does this case illustrate?
4. In the film Laura Nader asks: How does justice really work in the United States: who has knowledge of the law, access to the legal system, and the will and power to use it? What are her answers to these questions?