

USF School of Law

Fall 2021 – First Assignment

Course:

Wrongful Convictions Seminar

Professor:

Lara Bazelon

Course Materials:

Please reference the booklist on the USF Law Registrar's Course Resources [page here](#).

First Assignment:

Class 1: Wednesday, August 25: Overview of Wrongful Convictions

1. Mark Godsey Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions (2017). Pp. 1-112
2. Jessica Henry (2016). Smoke But No Fire: When Innocent People Are Wrongly Convicted of Crimes that Never Happened (2020). Pp. 1-23 (Introduction).
3. National Registry of Exonerations (2017). "The First 1600." (Posted to Canvas and available on-line).

MODULE DESCRIPTION

In this class, we will take a broad view of the innocence movement, from inception to the present. We will survey the major causes of wrongful convictions and what the legal process of trying to free a wrongfully convicted person entails. How are these claims brought? Under what legal theories? What kind of investigation is necessary and what procedural and practical barriers stand in the way?

As you do the reading, reflect on your own life experience. Have you ever been accused of something you did not do? If so, how did you react? Were you able to establish that the accusation was false? Whether this was a major or minor event in your life, imagine that experience magnified to the point where your freedom and reputation were at stake. What tools would you use to fight back? How confident would you be that you would prevail? Be prepared to discuss the story of your wrongful accusation/conviction to your classmates.

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand how the innocence movement came to be
- Begin to develop an understanding of how post conviction litigation differs from pretrial litigation
- Develop a familiarity with the causes of wrongful convictions
- Note the ways in which the legal system, while race neutral, gender neutral and class neutral on its face, operates in ways that are not neutral
- Think about what legal reforms would be necessary to combat the problem of wrongful convictions
- Engage as a reader and listener, and use your own perspective and life experiences to inform your participation in the class discussion

Additional Notes: