

## D: Sample Media Assignment

The student is to watch three (3) episodes of one of the many television series that pertain to criminal law and criminal procedure. Examples are *Law and Order* and *CSI* and their respective spin-offs, but the student may select a series approved by the instructor which s/he believes is appropriate for the assignment. (If you decide to watch shows such as *Boston Legal* or *The Practice*, for example, make sure that the episodes you watch pertain to criminal cases.) Note that if you have questions about the series, it is probably not appropriate and you should explore other series.

In this assignment, the student is looking for accuracies, inaccuracies and omissions in the portrayal of law enforcement and the court process, particularly as it pertains to criminal law and procedure. It must be comprised of five (5) distinct sections, each addressing the content listed below. The title of your paper should be the name of the television series, with a subtitle that thematizes the prominent issues you address.

1. **Introduction.** This is not an introduction to the series, but rather an introduction to your paper. You may briefly introduce the episodes, but you should also introduce the themes you will cover in the subsequent paragraphs and overall paper.
2. **Facts.** Provide enough facts about the character roles and episodes so that the reader can understand the rest of the content of your paper. This is somewhat tricky, but just as we do with cases, you need to provide enough facts assuming the reader did not see the episodes, yet be brief enough so as not to state irrelevant facts.
3. **Accuracies, Inaccuracies, and Omissions.** You are looking at criminal law and criminal procedure as one often cannot be discussed without the other in such an assignment. What are the major issues in the way the cases are handled and what does the series, in your estimation, portray accurately and inaccurately. Also, include any obvious omissions that should have been portrayed had it been a real life law enforcement agency and court system.
4. **Your take on the proceedings.** In this section, provide a discussion of how the cases should have been handled from the perspective of criminal law and procedure according to your understanding of the subject from the text and class lecture and discussion.
5. **Media Influence.** We have not really discussed this directly as a substantive matter in your prior papers on current events and the movie. The purpose of these assignments was to create an understanding of how the various forms of media portray the criminal justice process, and whether or not it is accurate, since that is where most laypersons obtain their understanding of the process. In this section, you are to discuss your take on the media's portrayal of the system overall and how it influences the general public, positively and/or negatively.