

Ethics in the Movies: Lessons For Real-Life

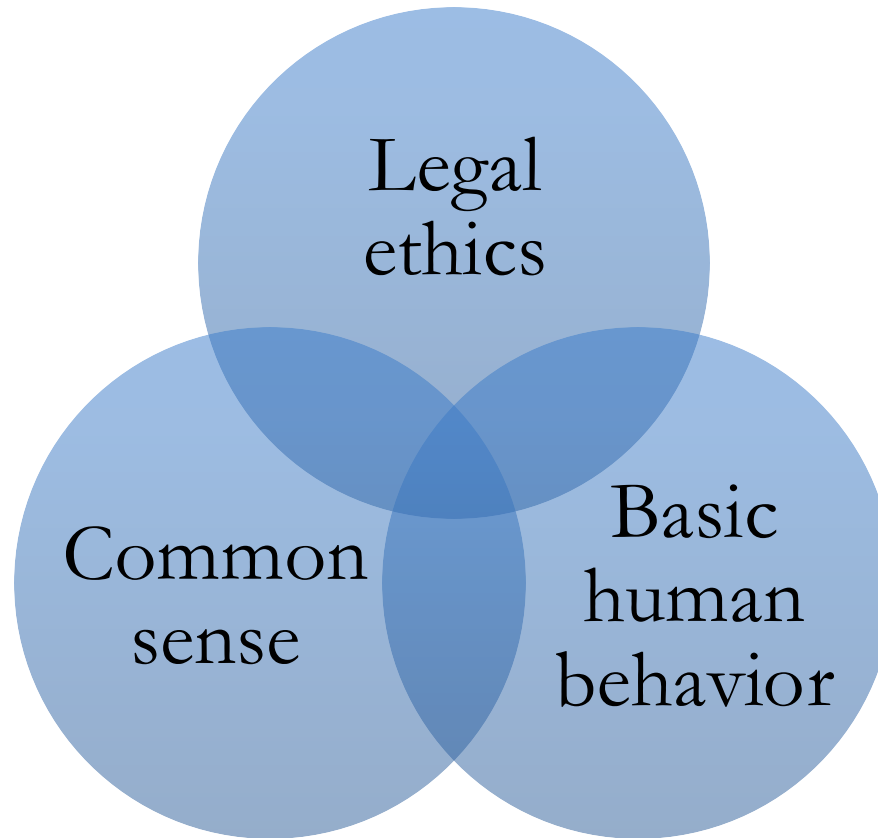
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Lawyer ethics aren't that hard to
“get”:



You already know the rules.

- Know your client.
- Know the ethics rules that apply to you.
- Don't lie.
- Remember your obligations as an officer of the court.
- Avoid conflicts of interest.

You already know the rules.

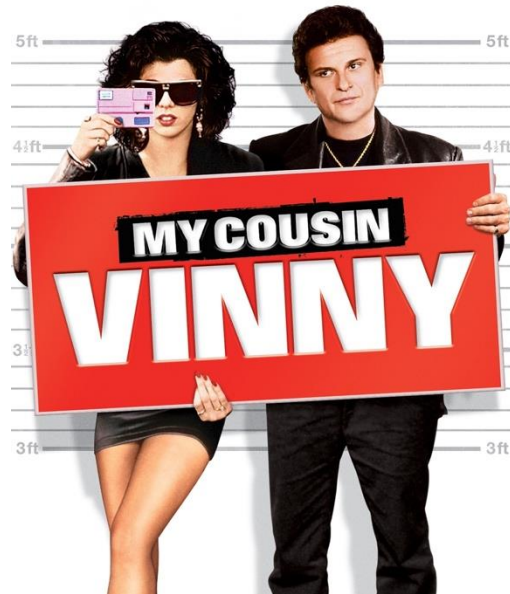
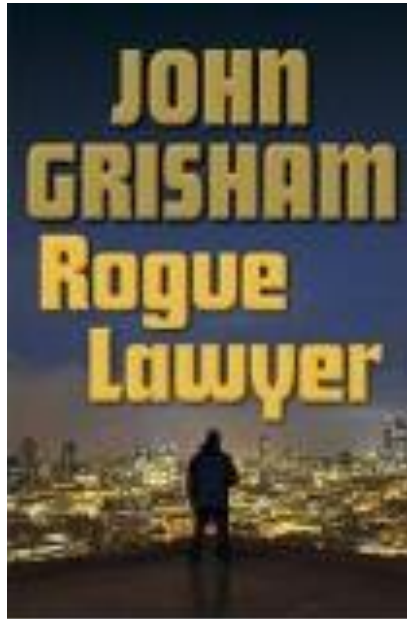
- And yet (like [Ron Popeil's](#) commercials), there's more:
 - Be diligent.
 - Be competent.
 - Don't be abusive.
 - Don't churn fees.
 - Communicate.



What are your first memories of lawyers in pop culture?

- This is the participatory part – you can call out names....
- Do you remember how those lawyers made you feel?

What clients “know” about ethics:



The four “eras” of pop culture lawyers.

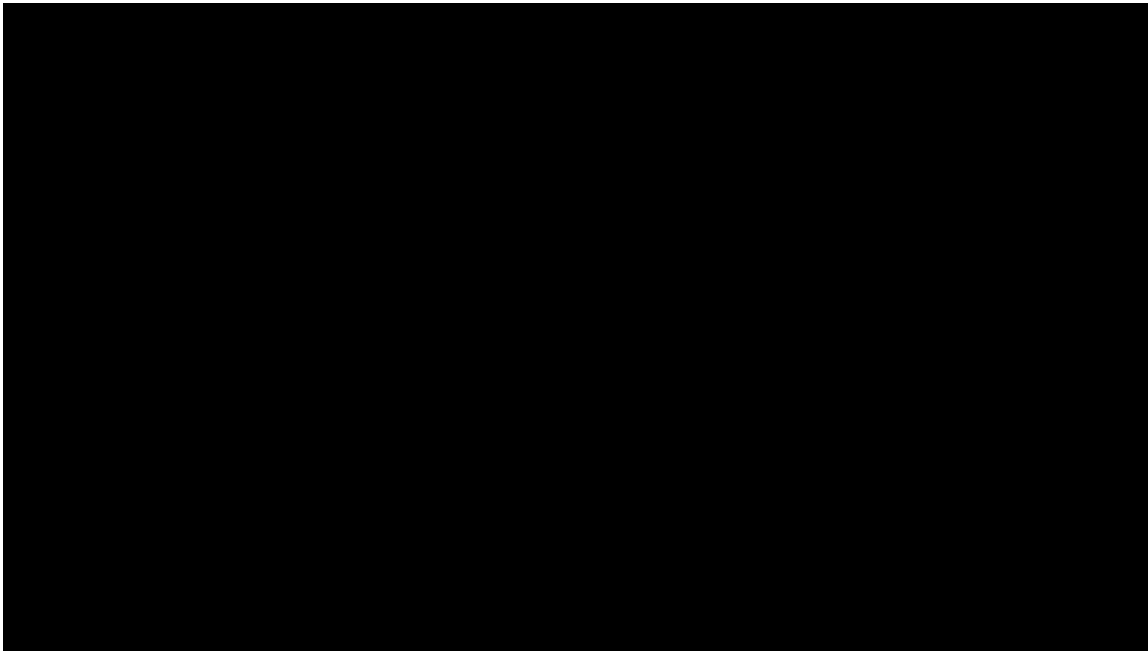
- Lawyer as hero of the community.
- Lawyer as anti-hero.
- Lawyer as *worse* than anti-hero.
- Lawyer as flawed human.

Lawyer as hero:



Inherit the Wind
(movie, 1960;
MGM/UA
Home
Entertainment
2007)

A more modern version—lawyer as hero:



Philadelphia
(TriStar Pictures
1993)

Lawyer as anti-hero:



*...And
Justice For
All*
(Columbia
Pictures
1979)

Lawyer as devil's spawn:



*The Devil's
Advocate* (Warner
Bros. 1997)

A more modern version: lawyer as devil's spawn



Michael Clayton
(Warner Home
Video 2008)

Of course, there's this take on law school, too:



Legally Blonde (MGM
2001)

And this one:



Legally Blonde
(MGM 2001)

And this one:



The Paper Chase
(20th Century
Fox 1973)

Lawyer as flawed human:



Liar Liar
(Universal
Pictures 1997)

The future looks marginally brighter, though....

- Now we're not the devil's spawn any more.
- Or the first victim of the T. Rex in *Jurassic Park*.
- We're complicated humans, with flaws and talents.
- Even television is starting to show more balanced lawyering.
 - Although I still bear a grudge about *Ally McBeal*.

Ethics sensitivity training time:

The Office (Season 5, Episode 2—Business Ethics)
(NBC/Universal Home Entertainment 2008)



My Cousin Vinny (20th Century Fox
1992)



Bananas (United Artists 1971)



The Lincoln Lawyer (Lions Gate Films
Home Entertainment 2011)



Bridge of Spies (Touchstone Pictures
2015)



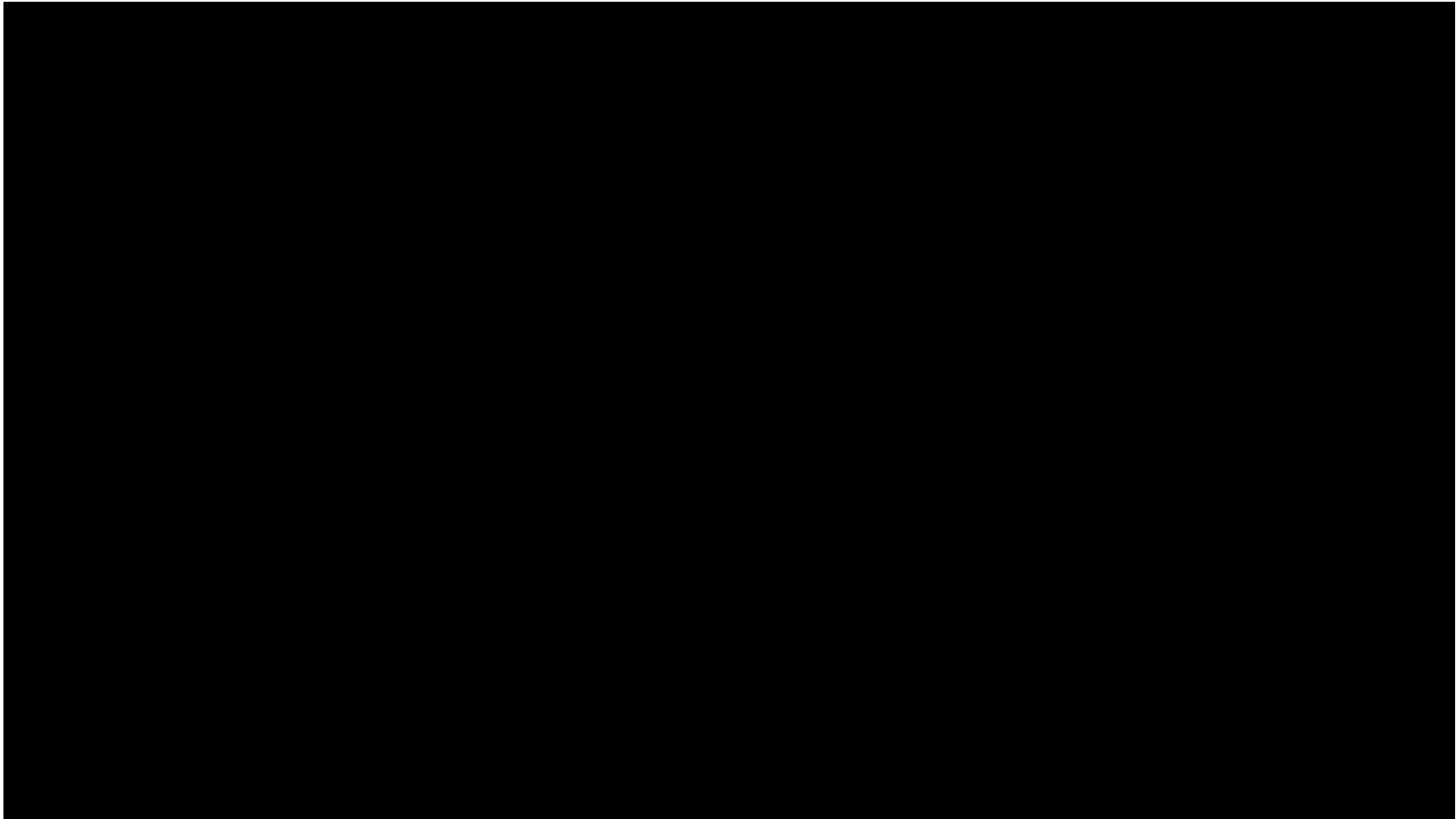
Bridge of Spies (Touchstone Pictures 2015)



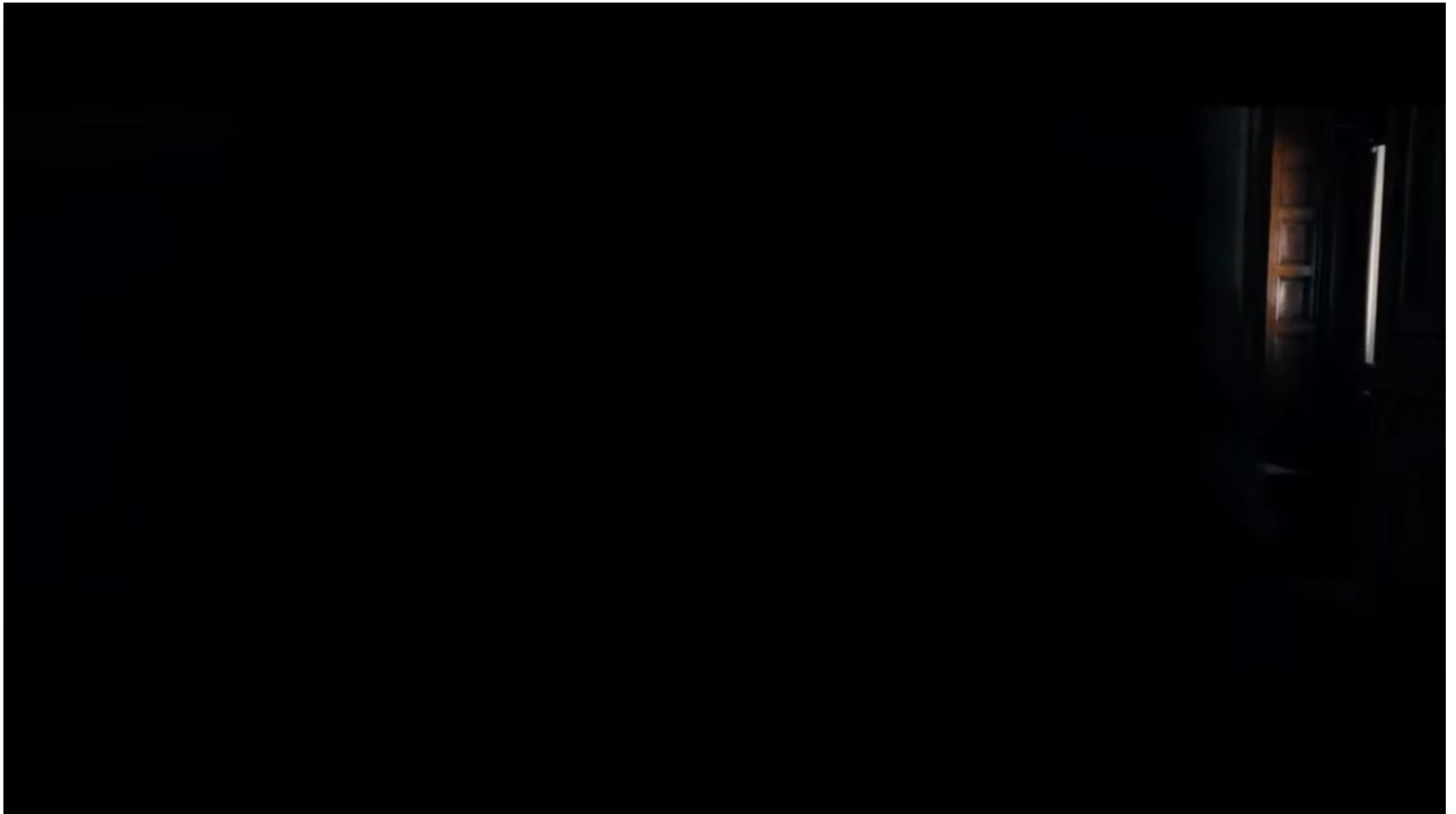
Dark Waters (Focus Featers 2019)



Richard Jewell (Warner Bros. 2020)



The Judge (Warner Bros. 2014)



Murder in the First (Warner Bros.
1995)



Caddyshack II (Warner Bros. 1988)



The Firm (Paramount 1993)



Legal Eagles (Universal Pictures 1986)



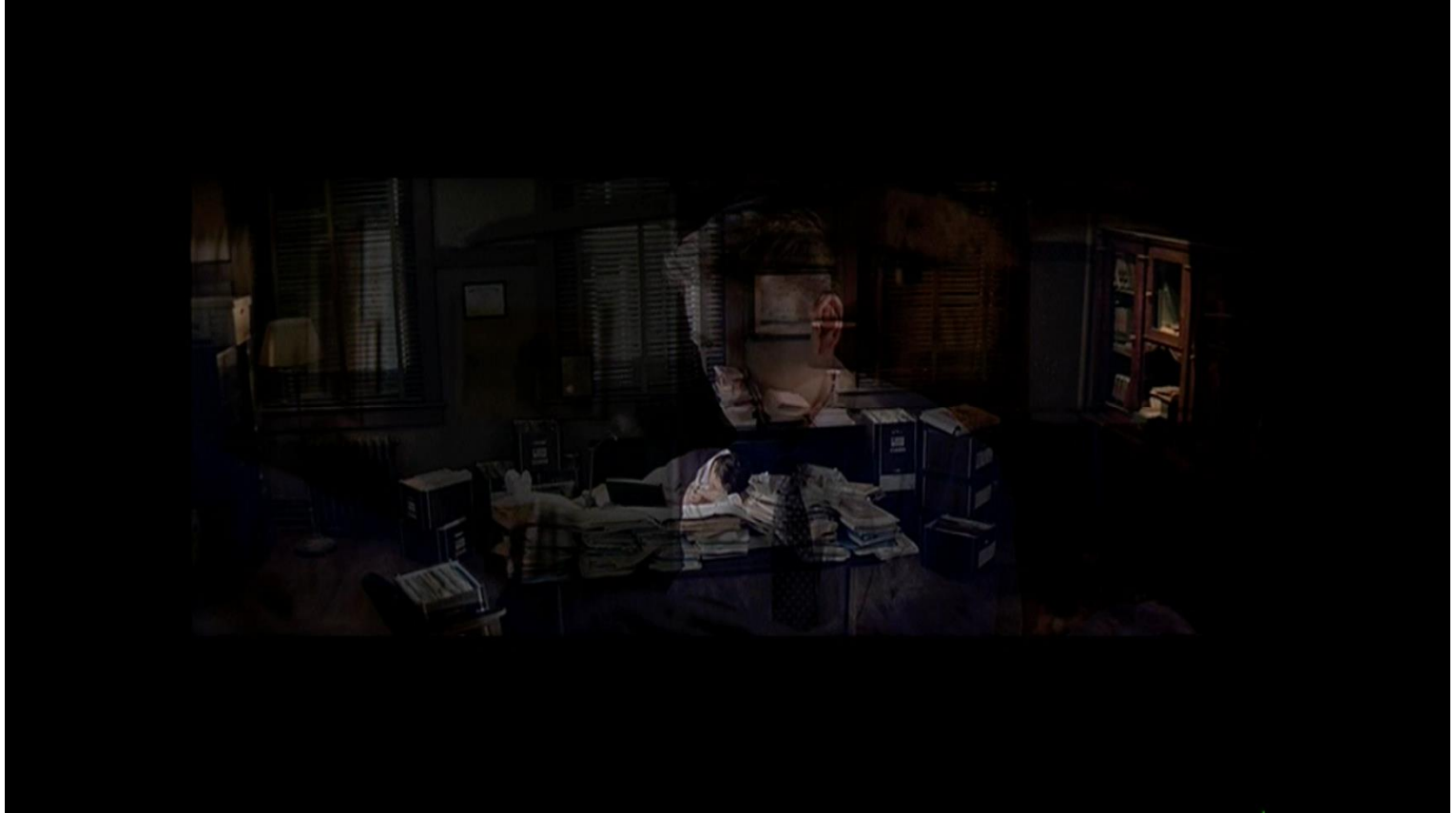
The Client (Warner Bros. 1994)



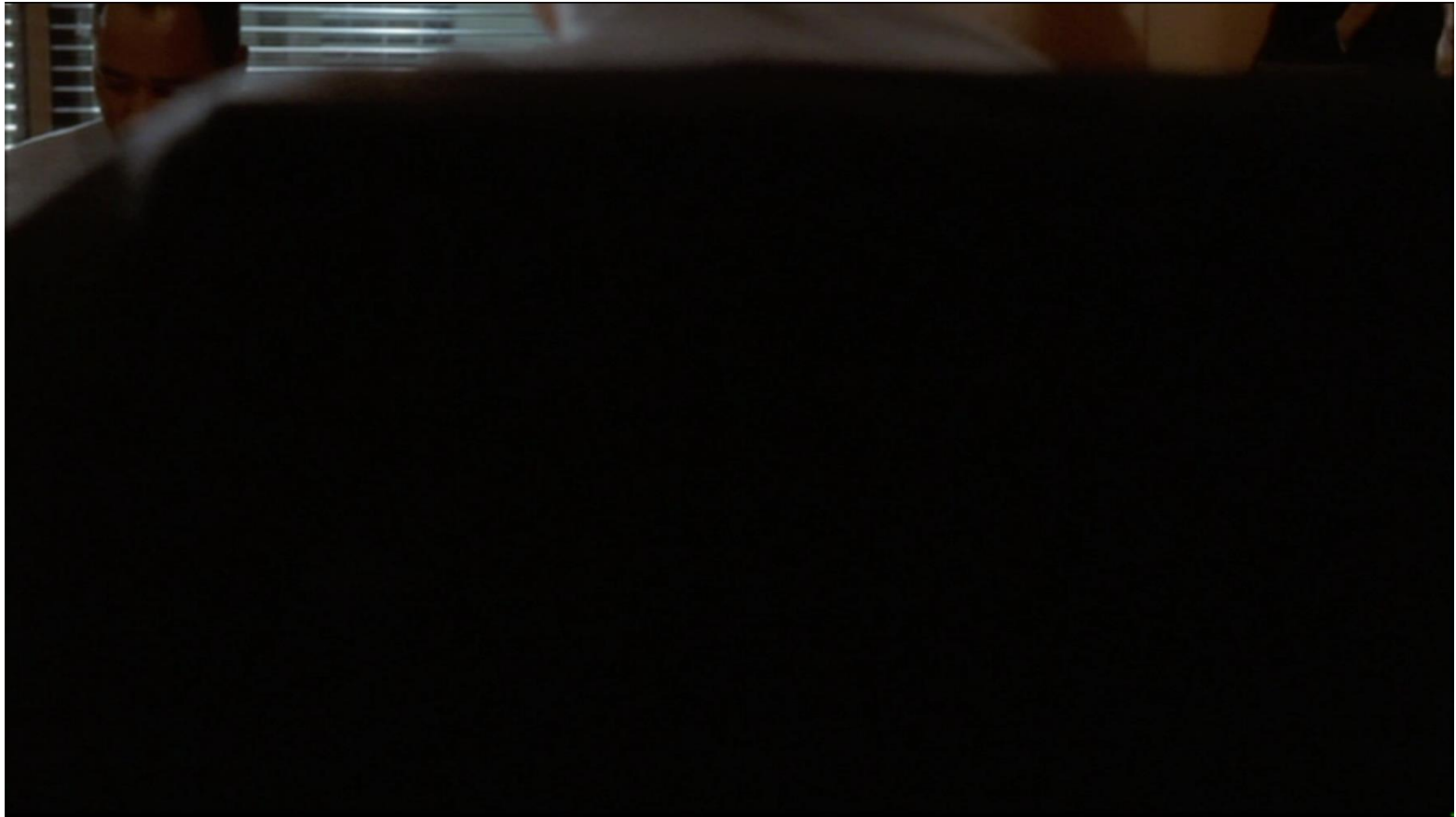
Matlock: The First Season (Paramount 2008)
(Episode 1—*Diary of a Perfect Murder* (1986))



The Rainmaker
(American Zoetrope 1997)



The West Wing (*In the Shadow of Two Gunmen, Part 1* (Season 2, Episode 1 (aired 2000)):



The West Wing (Bad Moon Rising,
Season 2, Episode 19 (aired 2001)):



Double Jeopardy (Paramount 1999):



Chicago (Miramax 2002)



My Cousin Vinny (20th Century Fox
1992)



My Cousin Vinny (20th Century Fox 1992)



A Few Good Men
(Columbia TriStar 1992)



Bottom line:

- First off, enjoy the movies/TV shows/books.
- Second, make sure that you're keeping in mind the difference between “pop culture lawyering” and real lawyering.