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It's Real and It's Spectacular: A Free Summer Class on 'Seinfeld' and the Law

The Yada Yada Law School will run for 10 weeks on Zoom over the summer, giving students a foundation in the law through the lens of the popular '90s sitcom.

By **Karen Sloan** | May 14, 2020 at 12:01 PM

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If the names of those endowed professorships don't make you chuckle, you're probably not a “Seinfeld” obsessive like University of Iowa law professor Gregory Shill—the mastermind behind the [Yada Yada Law School](#) (and the Art Vandelay Dean & Kenny Rogers Roasters Foundation Chair in Business Law.)

For the uninitiated, each of those (made-up) names reference characters and plot lines from the much-beloved '90s sitcom “Seinfeld,” which is the focal point of a free, online summer lecture series that explores the law through the lens of the show. The Yada Yada Law School will run for 10 weeks over the summer, with faculty from across the country offering up their expertise each



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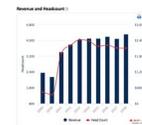
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Shill had been batting around the idea of teaching a “Seinfeld”-centered reading group for years, but other commitments always got in the way. The COVID-19 quarantine, however, means that he and many other professors have more time on their hands than usual. Not to mention a desire to have a little fun in challenging times.



Jerry Seinfeld.

“The idea is to provide some entertainment during quarantine, while offering some educational value,” Shill said in an interview this week, shortly after the Yada Yada Law School went public on Twitter. “It turns out there are a number of ‘Seinfeld’ obsessives among law faculty. We decided to take that problem and turn it into something of interest to multiple groups.”

Shill designed the class with a broad array of students in mind—no legal background necessary. But early signups have yielded practicing attorneys, law students and people curious about law school. Shill also expects to enroll plenty of pure “Seinfeld” enthusiasts. But you don’t have to be an expert on the many travails—and minor annoyances—faced by Jerry, George, Elaine, Kramer and the other weirdos in their sitcom orbit to keep up in the Yada Yada Law School. Students will get a heads up about the episodes and clips that will be discussed each week so they can watch and prepare if they so choose.

Shill's first priority for the Yada Yada Law School was to make sure that the core first-year courses were covered. There are lectures devoted to contracts, torts, constitutional law and criminal law, among others. A few classes stray beyond the core curriculum, including a session on securities fraud taught by Stanford Law fellow Andrew K. Jennings (aka the Susan Biddle Ross Memorial Professor of Law) and one on gender and sexual orientation.

One benefit of the pandemic and the online format of the Yada Yada school is that Shill is able to pull in faculty with a wide array of legal expertise—something he couldn't have done with a small, in-person reading group.

“If you look at the range of classes, really, no one professor has the expertise to teach across those fields,” he said. “This seems like a good vehicle for doing that, and to have fun.”

This is not the first time academics have mined “Seinfeld” for educational purposes. The Yada Yada Law School was inspired by a website called [The Economics of Seinfeld](#), which uses the show to illustrate different economic principles and concepts. But bringing professors and students together in real time seemed more enjoyable than just building a website about “Seinfeld” and the law, Shill said.

Finding law professors to teach the 10 classes was pretty easy. Shill had a solid idea of which legal academics are “Seinfeld” super fans through Twitter, then he asked around for tips on others who fit the bill. The entire Yada Yada Law School program came together in about a

month. The first class is slated for June 3, and people can [sign up here](#).

“Seinfeld” ran for nine seasons, with 180 episodes, so there is a lot to pull from. Deciding which episodes to include in his contracts lecture will be a challenge, said Shill, who wasn’t a fan of the show when it first aired but came to love it later.

“The characters all come into contact with these fields of law,” he said. “Sometimes in a direct way: At the very end, for example, they end up in prison. So that’s an example of criminal law. But they also interact with the law more indirectly and in a more whimsical way—all of these concepts come up. It’s the best show ever.”

Karen Sloan

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