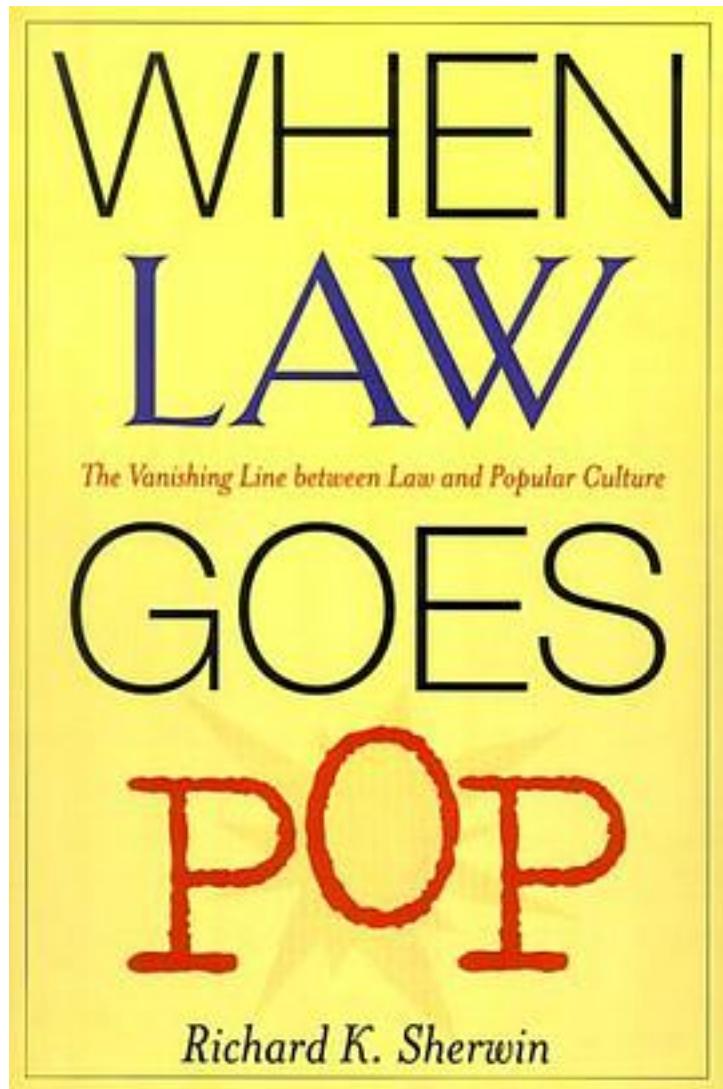


When Law Goes Pop



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In recent years, millions of TV viewers have devoured images of the law. Amy Fisher, O.J. Simpson, Rodney King and JonBenet Ramsey have become household names. To meet popular demand we have a cable channel devoted to trials and police dramas 24 hours a day. Quick justice-dealing judges preside over TV courtrooms resolving real-life conflicts. What are the consequences when legal culture and popular culture dissolve into each other? What happens, asks Richard K. Sherwin, when law goes pop? Sherwin, a law professor and former New York prosecutor, offers a pathbreaking interdisciplinary study of law and popular culture. He argues that in the welter of communication technologies, an unrestrained marketplace and postmodern ideas, law is increasingly becoming a spectacle, mimicking the style, techniques and visual logic of advertising and public relations. How will law continue to function when truth becomes interpretation and reality and fiction can no longer be separated? To answer these questions, Sherwin draws on a wealth of fascinating material: the contemporary storytelling strategies of lawyers; notoriously popular criminal cases in American legal history; representations of the law such as Errol Morris's "The Thin Blue Line"; and examples of how lawyers and judges have used the media to legitimize the judicial process. The law can be a powerful and affirmative tool for realizing meaning in postmodern life, but not when it is buffeted by corrosive cultural practices. "When Law Goes Pop" is an examination of legal practice in today's world, one that should be needed by everyone concerned with the future of our legal system and the meaning we invest in it.

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