

Classes focus on minority legal issues

By Meg Dedolph
Oregon Daily Emerald

Two law faculty, in conjunction with the ethnic studies department, are offering two classes on minorities and the law this year.

These classes — one focusing on Asians and the other on Chicanos — will be taught outside of the law school.

Elizabeth Ramirez, the chairperson of the ethnic studies department, said the president of the University and the deans of the College of Arts and Sciences have been supportive of the new courses and the department in general.

"The College of Arts and Sciences deans have gone out of their way to be supportive," Ramirez said. "They found us new offices on the third floor of Gerlinger."

"We're really trying to build a program and we're excited to have the facilities to do it. There's just a really positive view of this new program," she said.

Steven Bender, an associate professor at the law school who is teaching Chicanos and the Law, said the winter class will be about language issues, and how Spanish-speaking people are treated.

"I decided to focus on language because I think that's going to be the issue in coming years," Bender said. "It's either a way for people to be taken advantage of who don't understand the language or an opportunity for discrimination against people who don't speak English."

He said he wanted to emphasize the abuses of Spanish-speaking people as, for example, consumers or recipients of government services.

Bender described a California Supreme Court case in which it was ruled that an aspirin manufacturer did not have to print warnings about Reye's Syndrome, a potentially fatal disorder, in Spanish, even though the aspirin was marketed to Spanish-speaking people.

The course will also include a discussion of English-only rules in the workplace and elsewhere, which Bender said he expects to see increase and whether or not there is a Constitutional right to

bilingual education.

He cited two cases: one, in which a California food processing plant prohibited workers from speaking Spanish while on the job to allay other employees' fears that they were being talked about, and the second, in which an Oregon tavern owner asked Spanish-speaking patrons to sit at corner tables rather than at the bar to keep them from disturbing other people.

Bender's decision to teach this class, which is based on his research, came during last year's

Duck Call Info

Asian Americans and the Law, ES 410/510, CRN 16417/16418, will be offered Tuesdays fall term from 4 p.m. to 6:50 p.m. for four credits in room 301 Condon Hall.

debates on multiculturalism.

"There was an exodus from the campus of some of our most spectacular minority students who felt the classes had little relevance to them," Bender said. "I saw the ethnic studies department had a lack of courses, I sympathized and decided to teach about what I was working on."

He also hopes that by teaching a law class to undergraduates, he can encourage students, especially Chicano and Latino students, to apply to law schools. Bender said law schools are being encouraged to increase the number of minority applicants, particularly Chicanos and Latinos.

"Here is an opportunity for me to reach into the undergraduate ranks and introduce them to law school," Bender said. "The students who are interested at the undergraduate level — I can't resist the temptation to urge them to apply for law school."

On the other hand, associate professor Keith Aoki's fall term class, Asian Americans and the Law, will have a broader focus.

"The class is looking at how American law has

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'The Chamber' great summer novel

By Kaly Soto
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sliced bread? Well, maybe not but John Grisham's novels do seem to be very hot property these days.

The Chamber, his latest effort is no different. Once again the story is set in Mississippi and deals with murder, racism and justice.

Though Grisham does not have the ability to make his prose flow like poetry the way that fellow southerner William Faulkner did he is still tells an interesting story.

This story has all the elements of a Grisham novel: racism, crime, punishment, justice.

As far as story lines go, this one is not complicated. Sam Cayhall, the book's main character, is on death row in Mississippi's notorious Parchman prison. His crime is murder. Cayhall, a former member of the Ku Klux Klan member was convicted of a bombing in which the twin sons of a Jewish lawyer were killed.

After two unsuccessful trials Cayhall is finally convicted of murder in the third.

As the book opens Cayhall has fired his legal counsel and is attempting to proceed through the appeals process acting as his own counsel. Then something happens. Cayhall gets a visit from a young and enthusiastic lawyer from the west, Adam Hall.

Hall has been working death penalty cases for a very short period of time, unlike most of his colleagues he is excited as opposed to daunted by the prospect of helping Cayhall navigate through the last stages of his appeals process. At the heart of this novel is the death penalty debate.

From the time the audience is introduced to Cayhall he is made out to be a man of little visible remorse. But, as the book goes on Grisham tries to make the audience sympathetic to Cayhall. Sympathy is hard to muster, however, because of the nature and brutality of Cayhall's crime.

Grisham seems to hint at the harshness of Cayhall's upbringing as a contributing factor to his life of crime, but it doesn't wash.

The last half of this novel is dedicated to the last hours of Cayhall and the waiting even for the reader (or listener, I actually listened to this book on tape) is like being slowly suffocated. Even though Cayhall is not a character who arouses much sympathy, his situation is heartwrenching. Toward the end of the book Cayhall is more than ready for the execution to take place. Even though Hall makes every effort to get it stayed Cayhall makes peace with his destiny.

Though the main purpose of this book seems to be to create a convincing argument against the death penalty. If that was the purpose of the book Grisham failed. It would have been made better if the main character wasn't such a despicable guy. If the purpose of this book was to entertain, then Grisham was right on target.

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