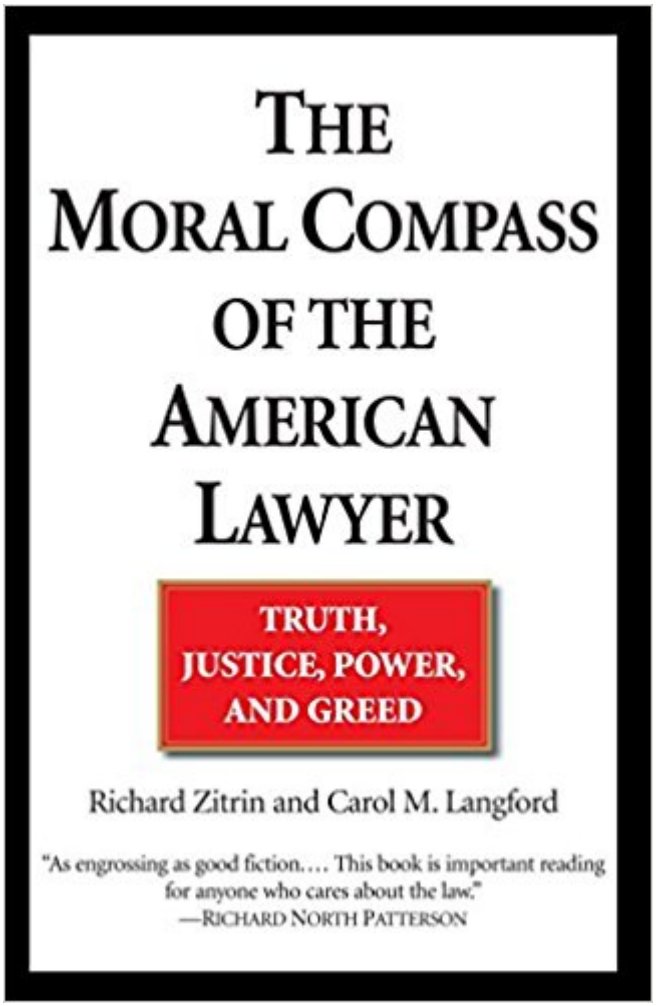
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The Moral Compass Of The American Lawyer: Truth, Justice, Power, And Greed



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Synopsis

These are perilous times for Americans who need access to the legal system. Too many lawyers blatantly abuse power and trust, engage in reckless ethical misconduct, grossly unjust billing practices, and dishonesty disguised as client protection. All this has undermined the credibility of lawyers and the authority of the legal system. In the court of public opinion, many lawyers these days are guiltier than the criminals or giant corporations they defend.Is the public right? In this eye-opening, incisive book, Richard Zitrin and Carol Langford, two practicing lawyers and distinguished law professors, shine a penetrating light on the question everyone is asking: Why do lawyers behave the way they do? All across the country, lawyers view certain behavior as "ethical" while average citizens judge that same conduct "immoral." Now, with expert analysis of actual cases ranging from murder to class action suits, Zitrin and Langford investigate lawyers' behavior and its impact on our legal system. The result is a stunningly clear-eyed exploration of law as it is practiced in America today--and a cogent, groundbreaking program for legal reform.

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Customer Reviews

We have all heard the derogatory jokes comparing lawyers to slimy, venomous invertebrates. And we have laughed. On the scale of public contempt, the legal profession ranks somewhere between tabloid journalists and telemarketers. What should be a good and honorable vocation is collectively vilified as devious and mercenary. In The Moral Compass of the American Lawyer, Richard Zitrin and Carol M. Langford try to explain legal ethics to nonlawyers. While they provide a vigorous defense of the American system of justice, they also note the ethical catastrophes caused by the

excesses of the adversarial process. Lawyers are not paid to defend "Truth, Justice, and the American Way," the authors note; they are paid to defend their clients, and the duty of zealous advocacy sometimes pushes lawyers to work at the margins of decency. Some lawyers straddle the ethical line, or skip back and forth with impunity; others dive headlong over the edge and never return. Clients want to hire successful lawyers, of course, and the lawyers who are successful are too often the ones who are willing to ignore the boundaries of professional responsibility. The ethics of the profession seem to be defined by whatever the slickest can get away with. Nice lawyers finish last in this race to the bottom, and the victors gladly suffer the slings and arrows of popular opinion as they amass outrageous billable hours. The Moral Compass of the American Lawyer is a sweeping overview of the ethical dilemmas that face every member of the legal profession every day--whether they are a criminal defense lawyer, personal injury attorney, corporate in-house counsel, or junior associate at a 500-lawyer megafirm. The authors also provide a frank assessment of the shortcomings of the entire U.S. judicial system, from the law schools to the courtrooms, and what can be done to remedy the situation. --Tim Hogan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a starting place for a broad-reaching contemplation of the moral challenges that face a much-maligned profession, Zitrin and Langford’s book is as good as any. The authors ask whether it is possible for a lawyer to remain a decent human being while practicing law in the current system. Their conclusion is less than sanguine. Each chapter addresses a different type of ethical dilemma that lawyers regularly face in their practice. The earlier chapters deal with the types of scenarios that underlie the general public’s distrust of lawyers: criminal trial attorneys who protect or become complicit with defendants; corporate attorneys who do the same for their wealthy clients. The book then moves on to more "lawyerly" concerns, such as the difficulties of representing a "class" in a class action and the use of attorney/client privilege by in-house corporate counsel. The authors, both practitioners and teachers, conclude with a chapter on their view of the changes necessary to protect the ethical future of the legal profession. General readers will likely savor the real-life accounts of unethical and sometimes criminally liable attorneys, while attorneys themselves may have little incentive to finish a book that implies that common human decency and morality are most often left at the door in the practice of law. If there’s a fundamental flaw to the book, it’s the emphasis on extreme examples of bad behavior rather than on the moral tightropes that even the most ethical lawyers walk every day. Major ad/ promo. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I agree with all of what is said in the positive ratings here. I have bought 3 copies....! The first was a used copy from the local library used bookstore. It got so dog earned...I bought a hard cover here, and another soft cover to give to a friend with legal problems. it's a riveting book, I could not put down. I have constantly referred to this book, and discussed it on many occassions. It's extremely eye opening, yet sickens me how the industry of Lawyers has become....a game of who wins...and who makes the most money. Honestly, it makes me ashamed of the American legal system at times.ts really HARD not to stereotype all lawyers after reading this. There are good ones...but I was especially chilled to read how law schools train students....and morality is quite lacking. it's truly a wonder that lawyers with heart, sanity, and lack of greed do exist. I think this book should be required reading for every student....regardless of future vocation.

Really great book. I had to read it for class so thought it might be a little stiff but I actually ended up really enjoying it. There are a lot of great cases discussed to illustrate points the authors are trying to make and it really gave me a lot to think about. Highly recommend.

This book is interesting, it is like psychiatry for medical student. I urge to author to expand his work into other contemporary issue. For example, puncturing the legalese bluff used by lawyer to deceive lay people. We all engage the service of lawyer such as in mortgage loan, bank loan etc. but most of us has no idea what a contract really mean. The Lehman Brother Minibond has caused so much sufferings to bond holder especially the pensioner. One of the complaints was, nobody really understand those pages of legalese bluff drafted by lawyer.Another interesting fact is the service of process etc. I would like to see this book expanded with more contemporary issues.

Bought the book for a class on the ethics of lawyers. Book is ok, covers a lot of ground. Gives the impression that lawyers are almost above the law, outside the law, a law unto themselves, special people. Lawyer and moral compass is an oxymoron as there is no moral direction or position to the practice of law. Legal ethics and morals are different. Lawyers are not bound by morals, which to lawyers are situational and subject to personal interpretation. Ethics are written rules. They're written by each state and enforced only by the profession itself. So to the extent that this book shows the reader that lawyers are not bound by morals, it's useful.

Richard Zitrin and Carol Langford have written here a book that will not only introduce the law

student to the sleazier side of law practice, but also warn the "law consumer" what to watch out for (or perhaps what to look for by way of "zealous representation").But this is not only a catalogue of egregiously unethical practices by real-world lawyers. It also contains interesting tidbits of great relevance to those who want to know what's wrong with the legal profession.(For example, here's a point libertarians will enjoy. Lawyers once tried to get around the silly practice of accounting for everything in "billable hours" by settling on standard fees for certain common legal tasks. What stopped them? Antitrust law. It seems adopting industry-standard fees is a form of collusion in restraint of trade. Thank heavens; the current system is _ever_ so much better.)Not long on solutions, this volume is still a solid overview of the sort of nonsense engendered by the adversarial system. It's also a list of good reasons to look into alternative dispute resolution the next time _you_ have a legal problem.For law students, I'd personally recommend supplementing it with any or all of the following: Mary Ann Glendon's _A Nation Under Lawyers_; Deborah Rhode's _In the Interests of Justice_; and Philip Howard's _The Death of Common Sense_.

Had to read this for class, but I was drawn in by the tumult and strain between social expectations and ethical obligations to clients by lawyers. Interesting read.

Had to get it for a college course - the first chapter was fairly interesting but the rest was a rather snooze. Then again, it was required for one of my mandatory courses so it served its purpose.

i'm a retired lawyer and will be teaching a class on legal ethics based on the ideas in the book. it's well researched and will appeal to layman who want to advance their knowledge of lawyers

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