



Imagining the Law: Common Law and the Foundations of the American Legal System

Norman F. Cantor

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At a time when the role of the legal profession, the jury system and other key aspects of American law are under much dispute, *Imagining the Law* provides a historical perspective on these critical public issues. Historian Norman Cantor explains how and why common law developed out of Roman law, in response to the needs and assumptions of English society and culture from 1000 to 1780, and how it became the basis of the American legal system.

Professor Cantor shows that many of the current debates about the jury trial, the adversarial model and other parts of our legal system stem from this history. He highlights the minds and personalities of prominent judicial leaders, from Cicero and Justinian in the ancient world, through Glanville and Bracton in the Middle Ages, to Coke, Blackstone and Bentham in later centuries. A concluding chapter relates the social and cultural history of common law to the American system of Supreme Court Justices John Marshall and Oliver Wendell Holmes and to the legal profession in the United States today.

Imagining the Law is authoritatively based on the extensive amount of recent research and writing in the field of legal history, and on Professor Cantor's reading of thousands of court cases. It is the first book to examine legal history in a cultural and sociological context and thus illuminates one of our most important institutions in a whole new way.

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