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**CHARTING A NEW DIRECTION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE AND LAW IN ACTION**

**Latest American Bar Foundation publications connect socio-legal studies with today's legal questions**

CHICAGO, July 26, 2016 — [Cambridge University Press](http://CambridgeUniversityPress.com) has released a new [two-volume book series](#) on [New Legal Realism](#), an [American Bar Foundation](#) (ABF) research project that has evolved into a major contemporary school of legal study. The volumes were co-edited by [Elizabeth Mertz](#), research professor at the ABF and the [John and Rylla Bosshard Professor of Law](#) at the [University of Wisconsin Law School](#).

The goal of the New Legal Realism (NLR) project is to develop rigorous, genuinely interdisciplinary approaches to the empirical study of law. *The New Legal Realism* volumes introduce readers to NLR scholarship, while demonstrating the value of thoughtful interdisciplinary translation between law and social science. This scholarship charts a new course for interdisciplinary legal research by synthesizing theory, empirical research, global perspectives, and law in action. The volumes together demonstrate the importance of the NLR project, not only for legal scholarship, but for law schools and practices.

The [first volume](#), [The New Legal Realism, Volume I: Translating Law-and-Society for Today's Legal Practice](#), is co-edited by Mertz, [Stewart Macaulay](#), professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin Law School, and [Thomas W. Mitchell](#), professor at [Texas A&M University School of Law](#). It lays the groundwork for the series with an innovative mix of theoretical, historical, pedagogical, and empirical perspectives. In this volume, leading scholars from a diverse mix of disciplinary backgrounds discuss issues ranging from the financial crisis and legal disenfranchisement of African-American landowners to intellectual property battles and gender and racial prejudice on law school faculties. Throughout, the volume offers a methodological blueprint for the future of empirical research on law, with a careful attention to the language of law and to interdisciplinary translation.

The [second volume](#), [The New Legal Realism, Volume II: Studying Law Globally](#), is co-edited by [Heinz Klug](#), professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School, and [Sally Engle Merry](#), professor at [New York University](#) and a member of the ABF's [external research review body](#). This volume explores a crucial part of the NLR project-- the integration of global perspectives and information into our understanding of law. Lawyers, judges, and other legal actors are increasingly influenced by broader interactions of national, international, and global law. Those pursuing justice in global contexts must wrestle with the added problems of translation that

emerge when vastly different concepts of law and local circumstances interact. In Volume II, the authors use empirical research to demonstrate the importance of understanding law in action, across all corners of the world. Contributors include ABF Faculty Fellow [Sida Liu](#), who authored a chapter on the changing role of lawyers in China, and ABF Research Professor [Carol A. Heimer](#), who co-authored a chapter on law in HIV treatment and research.

A national movement, [New Legal Realism](#) has [seminal ties](#) to the ABF. It began as an [ABF research project](#) co-directed by Mertz in the late 1990s. “It seemed clear that the legal academy was searching for a new way to integrate social science and law,” Mertz said. “After years of experience at the ABF, I knew that it was possible to bring the full range of disciplines together to understand law better—not just economics or psychology or anthropology, or any one approach, but all of them.” Mertz met with a group of scholars, including ABF Director Emeritus [Bryant Garth](#), to discuss plans for a research project. This resulted in a panel, “[Is it Time for a New Legal Realism](#),” at the 1997 annual meeting of the [Law and Society Association](#) (LSA). NLR scholarship has since been featured at subsequent meetings of the LSA and [American Association of Law Schools](#).

In June 2004, the ABF co-sponsored the [first](#) of several NLR conferences in the U.S. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The results of this conference appeared in issues of [Law & Social Inquiry](#), the ABF’s leading socio-legal academic journal, and the [Wisconsin Law Review](#). Mertz attended the first European NLR conference in 2012, and helped organize [ongoing efforts](#) in the U.S. as well. In 2014, the ABF co-sponsored the [10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference](#), held at the [University of California, Irvine Law School](#).

“New Legal Realism really embodies some of the best lessons of the ABF— having high standards and integrating the best social science knowledge so that we can move the ball forward to reach law’s highest aspirations,” Mertz said. In the last two decades, NLR has flourished into an emerging school of thought in U.S. legal philosophy, culminating in the release of this landmark two-volume series.

“These two volumes make the substantive intellectual case, by argument and example, for the value of such a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to socio-legal studies within the legal academy,” wrote [Michael W. McCann](#), the Gordon Hirabayashi Professor for the Advancement of Citizenship at the [University of Washington](#), in the preface to the volumes. “The timing of these two new volumes is also propitious and marks a new self-conscious form of engagement. Law schools are in a moment of heightened panic about the crisis of their professional mission, and these volumes outline new directions in both research and teaching that can help to reconcile contradictory pressures that mark the current uncertain situation.”

*The New Legal Realism* volumes are also available for purchase on Amazon ([Volume I](#) and [Volume II](#)). For more information on New Legal Realism, please visit the [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) page.

### **About the Editors**

**Elizabeth Mertz** is John and Rylla Bosshard Professor of Law at the University of Wisconsin Law School and Research Faculty at the American Bar Foundation. She is the author of *The*

*Language of Law School: Learning to “Think Like a Lawyer,”* (2007), co-winner of the Herbert Jacob Prize of the Law & Society Association.

**Stewart Macaulay** is an internationally-recognized leader of the law-in-action approach to contracts and a founder of the modern law and society movement. He is the author of *Law and the Balance of Power: The Automobile Manufacturers and Their Dealers* (1966), *Law in Action: A Socio-Legal Reader* (2007, with Lawrence Friedman and Elizabeth Mertz).

**Thomas W. Mitchell** is a professor at Texas A&M University, where he holds a joint appointment in the School of Law and in the Agricultural Economics Department. His research and policy work address property issues within disadvantaged communities. He served as the principal drafter of the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, a uniform act designed to strengthen property rights for disadvantaged common property owners, which several states have enacted into law.

**Heinz Klug** is Evjue-Bascom Professor of Law at the University of Wisconsin Law School and an Honorary Senior Research Associate in the School of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Growing up in Durban, South Africa, he participated in the anti-apartheid struggle, spent 11 years in exile and returned to South Africa in 1990 as a member of the ANC Land Commission and researcher for Zola Skweyiya, chairperson of the ANC Constitutional Committee. He was also a team member on the World Bank mission to South Africa on Land Reform and Rural Restructuring. He has taught at Wisconsin since September 1996. Professor Klug's book on South Africa's democratic transition, [Constituting Democracy](#) was published by Cambridge University Press in 2000.

**Sally Engle Merry** is Professor of Anthropology and of Law and Society at the New York University Law School. Her research interests include the role of law in urban life in the U.S., in the colonizing process, and in contemporary transnationalism. Her current project focuses on human rights and the use of indicators. Professor Merry's recent works include *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law* (2000) which won the J. Willard Hurst Prize from the Law and Society Association in 2001 and *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (2006). She also received the Kalven Prize for scholarly contributions from the Law and Society Association in 2007.

### **About the American Bar Foundation**

The [American Bar Foundation](#) (ABF) is the nation's leading research institute for the empirical study of law. An independent, nonprofit organization for more than 60 years, the ABF's mission is to serve the legal profession, the public, and the academy through empirical research, publications, and programs that advance justice and the understanding of law and its impact on society. The ABF's primary funding is provided by the [American Bar Endowment](#) and [The Fellows of The American Bar Foundation](#).

### **About Cambridge University Press**

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